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THE CULT OF VIṬHOBĀ

Poona University and Deccan College
Publications in Archaeology and History of Maharashtra

THE CULT OF VIṬHOBĀ

by

G. A. Deleury S.J., Ph.D.

DECCAN COLLEGE
Postgraduate and Research Institute
POONA

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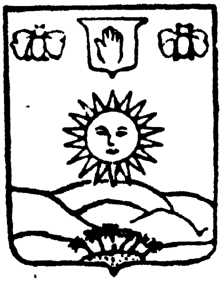

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FOREWORD

It is a matter of great significance that the first of the publications jointly sponsored by the University of Poona and the Deccan College in the field relating to the Archaeology and History of Maharashtra deals with the Cult of Viṭhobā which, originating within Maharashtra, has spread far and wide beyond its geographical limits. The work undertaken by several departments of the Deccan College goes beyond the confines of Maharashtra and covers practically all aspects of Indian Culture, and has given it the status of an all-India research centre. But the key to its manifold contributions is the unravelling of the threads of history in their space-time context. The University of Poona, having regard to the special relation of these studies to the region of Maharashtra, accepted the suggestion of the Deccan College that they should jointly publish such of the research produced in the Deccan College appertaining to Maharashtra in a new series. The authorities of the University have provided a total grant of Rs. 15,000 spread over a period of five years to assist the Deccan College in bringing out this limited series of joint publications. The Deccan College gratefully acknowledges this assistance from the Poona University which is in addition to grants which the University has been making annually in various directions without the restrictive regional label. The Deccan College, situated in the heart of the Maharashtra region planned its research programme with Maharashtra as the focal point and gradually extended it beyond; but its slender resources did not permit the publication of important researches bearing on the history and archaeology of this significant region which has been the meeting place of the manifold cultural forces in our country. The credit for making this research available in print must go to the enlightened interest of the Poona University, and the Deccan College is conscious of the honour the University has bestowed on it by co-sponsoring this series. The present work will be shortly followed by the remaining works of this series during the next three years. They will unfold the pattern of life and culture in what has been known as Maharashtra from ancient times.

12th July, 1960
21st Āṣāḍha Śaka 1882

S. M. KATRE

PREFACE

Says Gandhiji :

"Temples are so many bridges between the Unseen, Invisible and Indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the Infinite Ocean. We, the human family, are not all philosophers. We are of the earth very earthy, and we are not satisfied with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow or other we want something which, we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know that each time you visit them you will come away from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God."[1] .... "For the faithful Hindu, his Incarnation is without blemish. Krisna of the Hindu devotee is a perfect being. He is unconcerned with the harsh judgment of the critics. Millions of devotees of Krishna and Rama have had their lives transformed through their contemplation of God by these names. How this phenomenon happens, I do not know. It is a mystery. I have not attempted to prove it. Though my reason and my heart long ago realized the highest attribute and name of God as Truth. I recognize truth by the name of Rama. In the darkest hour of my trial, that one name has saved me and is still saving me .... Temple-worship supplies the felt spiritual want of the human race."[2]

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[1] *Harijan*, 23-1-37.

[2] *Ibid.*, 18-3-33.

The temple of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr is dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa under the name of Viṭhobā or Viṭhṭhala. It is one of those many places in India which every year attracted thousands of pilgrims. How did it come that a French student happened to choose it as a subject matter for his thesis? So many factors enter in the choice of a thesis : the environment, the advice of the professors, the leanings of the student. It so happens that in France, today, the curiosity towards things Indian is strongly growing. It is partly due to the spiritual urge of the post-war Frenchman which explains as well the Catholic revival in that country. For many of them, India stands as a spiritual beacon towards which it is good to look after the destruction of the formerly powerful myth of indefinite scientific progress. The wish to know more about this aspect of India, to get into direct contact with a living as well as traditional Indian religious movement and not to be satisfied with academic speculations on the Vedas or with the superficial information given in books written by Indians or Europeans "ad usum Europeanorum", is undoubtedly at the bottom of this thesis.

But why this choice of the cult of Viṭhobā and of the so-called Paṇḍharpūr movement among so many others? The advice of the Indologists of the Paris University was certainly the decisive factor in that choice. For a long time, since the days of the great pioneer Prof. Sylvain Levy, scholars were chiefly concerned with Sanskrit studies and other connected subjects. Nowadays, there is a definite trend to deal more and more with modern Indian languages and literature. Regarding the philosophico-religious studies, succeeding the interest shown in Vedic or Upaniṣadic speculations, researches in modern or popular religious movements have been of late more and more encouraged. Prof. P. Meíle says: "On the other hand, within Hinduism, the local traditions connected with the holy places and the temples have a very strong influence. To know the religions of India accurately, it would be necessary, (and such a work is hardly begun) to make a catalogue of the various places of worship and to draw a map. The geography of the Indian religions would be an ethnological datum of the greatest value."[3] The wish to fill a gap in that map is at the origin of this thesis.

But why the choice of Paṇḍharpūr rather than of Tirupati, Puri, Śrīśailam or so many others? It is much more difficult to answer this question, for there is always an irrational factor in the choice of a subject-matter for a thesis. Two reasons however may be given by way of explanation and the first foremost is the taste for the unknown. Places like Benares, Dwārkā, Rameśvaram, Madurā and many others with their

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[3] L. RENOU, *L'Inde Classique.*

artistic or archaeological aspect had been described by many writers. Even if the information given was somewhat scanty and superficial, these places were known. But who in France had ever heard of Paṇḍharpūr? And who had ever heard of Viṭhobā? Names like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, or even Kālī were known to any one who had read a little about India, but Viṭhobā? Then the average French reader had heard of the fame of Tulsidās, Kabīr, Rabindranāth Tāgore (by the marvellous translation of the 'Gitanjali' by A. GIDE) or even the famous Alwars: he was not unaware of the richness of Hindi, Bengali, or Tamil literature. But even if by chance he had heard of the name of Tukārām, he was not aware of any Marāṭhī literature. So, the thrill of discovering a new land may have directed the choice of this subject for a thesis.

Once the curiosity for an unknown domain was aroused, the perusal of all the available information followed, and although this was very scanty and vague, a new interest and a deep attraction were felt by the writer when he discovered there was, connected with Paṇḍharpūr and Viṭhobā, a very original school of spirituality called the 'Vārkarī sampradāya'. This school seemed to be quite different from other Indian spiritual groups. For, these belonged to the general Bhakti movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. which were mostly due to the teachings of Rāmānuja's disciples, but the Vārkarī did not seem to follow the philosophy of that great teacher, but rather the philosophy of Śankara. Then, although they were great devotees of Kṛṣṇa, they did not on that account show any contempt or hostility towards the devotees of other gods: there seemed to be an eclectic attitude which did not allow esoterism or fanaticism. For although deeply devoted to a very personal god called Viṭhobā they did not seem to indulge in the many exaggerations in asceticism which had been mentioned by many travellers in other parts of India, and had become for many Europeans inseparable from the idea of Indian mysticism.

Another point which seemed to differentiate it from other sects was that its members had a definitely democratic outlook. Anybody could become a Vārkarī, and it looked remarkable in the midst of a society organised according to the rules of castes. Then the Vārkarī seemed to have a very keen feeling of solidarity which not only tied them closely together, but united them in a spiritual body composed of the departed members as well as of the living. Their veneration for the Saints and their faithfulness to their memory gave to their group a very attractive human touch. This group indeed seemed to have been particularly fertile in powerful personalities and creative writers.

Besides, it was not a thing of the past, not even a dying relic of a once powerful spiritual revival. It was, as the numbers of pilgrims going every year to Paṇḍharpūr clearly showed, an actual, living and popular religious phenomenon. To study it would mean to get into contact with a religious experience, not only well representative of Hindu spirituality, but also valuable for its universal significance.

The first aim of this thesis is therefore to give to the European reader a description as faithful as possible of the cult of Viṭhobā and of the Vārkarī Panth. The Indian readers will thus have to forgive the writer for being sometimes lengthy on what would seem obvious to them but to which Europeans are unfamiliar. Nevertheless it is our hope that this work will not be absolutely useless for them, for although the Vārkarīs are well-known in Mahārāṣṭra, in other parts of India many people are unaware of their existence or at least have some hazy ideas about their nature. In Mahārāṣṭra itself, there have been few comprehensive studies on that movement. The Rāmdāsis, the Nāthas, and in more recent times the Mānbhāvas have been the subjects of monographs, while the Vārkarī movement, although many books and articles have studied some aspects of their history or of their teachings, have not received the same attention. This thesis will therefore be an attempt to present in a synthetic way the result of many more specialised researches, so as to give a comprehensive, if necessarily, superficial view of the Vārkarīs and their god Viṭhṭhala. The originality resides more in that compendium than in the discovery of new material.

Nevertheless some fresh evidence has been brought to light. In our enquiry on the etymology of the word Viṭhṭhala we have suggested that this word came from the Kannaḍa word Biṭṭa and we have shown the consequences of this opinion. Some fresh comparisons between the image of Viṭhobā and some others have been proposed in our chapter on Iconography, particularly with the images of Śrī of the Buddhist, and of Bir Kuar of the Āhir tribes of West-Bihar. A special research based on extensive travelling over the whole of Mahārāṣṭra and Karṇāṭaka has resulted in the discovery of several temples dedicated to Viṭhobā in which some image of Viṭhobā was carved, hitherto unknown to the scholars. A comprehensive study brought together data concerning religious matters as found in the Buddhist and Jaina religions as well as religious ideas and practices of several aboriginal tribes.

In our account of the history of Paṇḍharpūr we had to relate events well-known to the Indian student but with which the European reader is not so familiar. But even in that case, the history of the Deccan is examined in relation to Paṇḍharpūr, thus giving this account a certain character of originality.

Finally, this thesis has brought the writer into direct contact with many Vārkarīs, and it is hoped that their indirect contribution to this work will be as valuable for the European reader as it has been for the writer. The Pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr related by an eye-witness invited in spite of his quality of a foreigner and Catholic to accompany the procession in its two-week journey will give fresh material to the European scholar for the study of modern religious activities in India. It may also be useful for the Vārkarīs to know how a European reacts to their pilgrimage. And was there any other way to get a real insight into the spiritual life of the members of this Panth, but to take inspiration from the advice given by Tukārām.

"Go, to Paṇḍharī, and become a Vārkarī"?

We must here thank all those who had helped in making this thesis possible: the staff of the Deccan College Research Institute, specially Dr. Sankalia and Dr. Harshe who with an untiring kindness have examined the whole thesis and corrected many mistakes by offering their valuable criticism: Principal S. V. Dandekar who has introduced us into the "society of the Saints', invited us to join his diṇḍī and partake of its life during the Pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr in July 1951, and followed the progress of our work with eagerness: Mr. Wadia whose expert advice corrected our faulty English in many places, and many others among the scholars, students and Vārkarīs of Poona who lent us their valuable assistance. We are indeed very grateful to them.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute.
AIOC	All-India Oriental Conference, (Proceedings of....).
Anthr.	Anthropos.
ArO	Archiv Orientalni.
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India.
ASM	Archaeological Survey of Mysore.
ASWI	Archaeological Survey of Western India.
BDCRI	Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute.
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême-Orient.
BG	Bombay Gazetteer.
BISMQ	Bhârat Itihâs Saṁshodak Mandal Traimasika.
CI	Census of India, 1931.
EC	Epigraphia Carnatica.
EI	Epigraphia Indica.
HISI	Historical Inscriptions of Southern India.
IA	The Indian Antiquary.
IAL	Indian Arts and Letters.
IC	Indian Culture.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
IMP	Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency, (Topographical list of....).
IP	Indu Prakash edition of Tukârâm.
J	Jog edition of Tukârâm.
JA	Journal Asiatique.
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the RAS.
JHAS	Journal of the Hyderabad Archaeological Society.
JIH	Journal of Indian History.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JRASB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JUB	Journal of the University of Bombay.
LSI	Linguistic Survey of India.
MAD	Mysore Archaeological Department, (Annual Report of....).
MG	Mysore Gazetteer.
MSL	Memoire de la Société de Linguistique de Paris.
NAD	Nizam's Dominion Archaeological Department, (Annual Report of..).
NIA	New Indian Antiquary.
O	Olice Abhang.
PB	Prem Bodh (Paṇḍharpûr).
PO	Poona Orientalist.
QJMS	Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society.
SII	South Indian Inscriptions.
VSCV	Vijayânagara Sexcentenary Commemoration Volume.

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CHAPTER 1

THE VĀRKARĪ PANTH

The religious movement known as the VĀRKARĪ PANTH was until the publication of Dr. R. D. Ranade's work on *Mysticism in Mahārāṣṭra*, little known to European Scholars. Indeed the word Vārkarī very seldom occurs in Indological studies. We find brief mention of that sect in the publications of Farquhar and of Stevenson. According to the first of these writers,[1] the Vārkarīs are a Bhāgavata sect worshipping a God representing together the characters of Viṣṇu and of Śiva. The second[2] calls it a Buddho-Vaiṣṇavite sect on the ground that its followers worship Buddha under the local name of Viṭhṭhala. Another writer, Hopkins[3] only reproduces the statements of Stevenson : "Viṭhṭhala Pāṇḍuraṅga is the Buddha". According to Nicol MacNicol[4] the Vārkarīs are a Vaiṣṇavite sect akin to the other Vaiṣṇavite revivalist movements, which after the death of Ramānanda spread all over India.[5] The poems and devotional songs composed by the saints of Paṇḍharpūr exert a living influence on the Marāṭha people to this very day. Sacred music also plays some part in their ceremonies.

Among the writings of French scholars, mention of the Vārkarī Sect can be found several times in a recent publication on Classical India, written by various writers under the direction of Prof. L. Renou.[6] This revival of the Hindu faith does not seem to them to be a mere logical development of the Vedic tradition, but the birth of a new religion produced by the revival of old local cults merging into traditional Brahmanism. According to them Pāṇḍuraṅga is a local God who entered the Brahmanical pantheon as an avatāra of Viṣṇu.

These various references to the Vārkarī sect, lost as they are in books on Hinduism, do not throw much light on its nature and its unique character, among the other religious movements in India. It is therefore useful at the beginning of our enquiry to know what Vārkarī signifies for a Vārkarī himself. The most qualified of them, Principal S. V. Dandekar, will guide us in our answer.

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[1] Farquhar, J. N., Outlines of Religious Movements in India, pp. 142, 234.

[2] Stevenson, J., An Account of the Buddho-Vaishnavas or Viṭhṭhal Bhaktas of the Dakhan, in *JRAS* 13.66 (1843).

[3] Hopkins, E. W., Religions of India, p. 500. (Footnote).

[4] MacNicol, N., *Living Religions of the Indian People*, p. 79.

[5] MacNicol, N., *Indian Theism*, pp. 120, 126.

[6] Renou, L., *L'Inde Classique*, p. 445.

The word Vārkarī[7] *is composed of the two words* "vārī" and "karī": *'vārī' has a very definite and almost technical meaning.* The root 'vār' means time as in the expressions three times, four times and so on: so 'vārī' stands for the regular occurrence of the pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr, the annual going and coming from that sacred place. "Karī" means the one who does; Vārkarī therefore means one who journeys to Pandharpur at the fixed time. And this is indeed the first characteristic of the Vārkarī, a regular pilgrim to Paṇḍharpūr. It is not an occurrence which may happen once in a lifetime, as in the case of a Hindu going to Kāśī and Rāmeśvara or a Muslim going to Mecca; Vārkarīs must go to Paṇḍharpūr twice every year, at least, and if possible on foot, on the Āṣāḍhī Ekādaśī day and on the Kārtikī Ekādaśī day i.e. on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of the lunar months of Kārtika and Āṣādha. Some who can afford to do so may go there on every ekādaśī, while the most ardent of them may be found spending their whole lives on pilgrimages between Dehū, Āḷandī and Paṇḍharpūr.

Although this last mentioned type of Vārkarī does not differ from the vairāgīs or the various kinds of sādhus who can be seen on any of the Indian roads, he would be an exception among the Vārkarīs because the kind of life led by the ever wandering sannyāsīs is not held in high esteem by them. He has not to renounce his family, or his work, or his home, he has not to cease to live in the gṛhasthāśrama state and to adopt the sannyāsāśrama way of life. In European terminology he is not a monk, but a tertiary. The movement is open to all, and as a matter of fact the majority of Vārkarīs are villagers, peasants, craftsmen and tradesmen.

The Vārkarī is sometimes called Māḷkarī or "the one with a garland" on account of his wearing around his neck a rosary of Tulasī beads. Tulasī is the favourite plant of Kṛṣṇa and it is to honour him that the Vārkarī wears a tulasīmālā. This necklace has also another significance. It is the sign that the wearer is a vegetarian. Indeed, if Vārkarī is asked why he is wearing the tulasīmālā, he will answer "because we have made a vow not to eat meat". Thus, this name of Māḷkarī gives us two new characteristics of the Vārkarī i.e. his favourite God is Kṛṣṇa and he is a vegetarian.

Another name[8] given to the Vārkarīs as a whole is Bhāgavata Panth. The word "panth" which has been used several times already has the meaning of "a road" or "a way", then "a way of salvation", then "a religious sect", in the same way as "mārga" which means a "panth or road", and then the "path towards Mokṣa". But "mārga" is used to signify the "corpus doctrinae" as in Bhaktimārga, whereas panth is used for the group of the followers of this or that school of spirituality. It has in a way, the same meaning as the word "sect" in English, but as it also connotes something more than just "sect" we will use "Panth" in our text in preference to the word sect. A panth is called Bhāgavata[9] when it teaches the Bhāgavata Faith, that is to say when it prefers to any other way, the bhakti way of salvation. The fountain head of all the Bhāgavata panths is the Bhāgavata Purāṇa although there are two different interpretations. The various Bhāgavata panths of Northern India follow the Rāmānuja interpretation and belongs to the Dvaita school of philosophy.[10] The Vārkarīs on the other hand, although teaching the devotional way of salvation, follow the philosophy of Śankara and its non-dualistic system. Their Bible, the "Jñāneśvarī" is the follower of the Advaita school.

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[7] DANDEKAR, S. V., *Vārkarī Panthācā Itihāsa*, pp. 1, 2.

[8] Ibid., p. 2.

Another term used by the Vārkarī is "Santasajjanāncī Māndī" or the Society of the Saints. This is meant to imply not that the Vārkarīs consider themselves to be saints, but that they are persons who live in the society of the saints, dead or alive. This is a very striking characteristic of the Vārkarī Panth. The importance of being in close contact either with the living saints (best achieved by accompanying them on pilgrimages to Paṇḍharpūr) or with the saints of the past (by reading and memorising their works) is always stressed by the great teachers of the Panth.

We are now able to give a more accurate answer to the question "what is a Vārkarī"? He is a man who although living in the midst of his family and carrying on his profession or trade has pledged himself to reach mokṣa through the way of bhakti, and by devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of Viṭhobā of Paṇḍharpūr, and to go on pilgrimage to that place every year at the fixed time, guided on the road by the society of the saints. He is also a strict vegetarian.

The definition, although still very superficial, enables us to differentiate the Vārkarī Panth from the other religious sects in India. They have a strong aversion to any form of rigorous asceticism or fanatical devotion. Such manifestations arising out of a lack of spiritual balance, and so commonly encountered in other pilgrimages or ceremonies in Northern and Southern India, are not found in connection with the pilgrimage of Paṇḍharpūr.

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[9] DHURANDHAR, B. K., *Tukārām Caritra*, p. 24.

[10] The Vallabha Panth of Gujarat however does not follow the Rāmānuja line.

The devotees of Viṭhobā do not throw themselves under the wheels of his chariot, nor do they pull it with ropes hooked to their limbs: they do not sleep on beds of nails, or perform wonderful feats of asceticism. They practise their religion at home, in the midst of their families, quietly, with the cheerfulness and the stolid common-sense of the Marāṭha peasant.

The Vārkarī movement or the Vārkarī saṁpradāya as it is called in Marāṭhī, is not a church. There is no centralised organisation, no hierarchy, no general councils, no credo, no sacraments. It is a spiritual movement, or more exactly a body of spiritual groups gathered around spiritual Gurus. It is a third order within Hinduism of people following the spiritual teachings of the great saints of Paṇḍharpūr. The only public manifestation of the Panth is the pilgrimage to that place. Membership of the Panth does not involve the abnegation of the ordinary duties of one's own caste, which the Vārkarī can freely continue to perform. And as there are no special Vārkarī ceremonies or 'sanskāra' in addition to the usual Hindu sacraments, and no special esoteric rites either or exclusive 'mantras' nor any characteristic symbols to be carried on the body or on the forehead, there is nothing which serves to distinguish a Vārkarī from non-Vārkarīs of his own caste. He is simply a Hindu who has pledged himself to fulfill his religion as perfectly as he can, and to observe as faithfully as possible the customs of his 'dharma' and of his caste.

For entry into the panth there is therefore no ceremony or rite of initiation which the Vārkarī must undergo, such as the Upanayana or the Sacred Thread ceremony among the high caste Hindus, or baptism among the Christians. Contrariwise, in the Mānbhav sect[11] there is a very elaborate rite of initiation which separates the initiated from others. Nevertheless for those wishing to enter the Panth there does exist a very simple ceremony, akin to the taking of monastic vow. The candidate presents himself together with a friend already a Vārkarī (and who will vouch for him) before the head of one of the Vārkarī groups and expresses his desire to join the Panth. He must bring a rosary of 'tulasī' beads which the Guru tells him to put on the book of Jñāneśvarī, set on a low table in front of him. The candidate then pledges himself to go regularly to Paṇḍharpūr on the fixed dates, and to live a straightforward life according to the Hindu 'Dharma'. Thereupon the Guru places the Tulasīmālā (which the Vārkarī must never be without) round his neck,[12] and gives him spiritual advice, enjoining him to lead a life of service and respect to the Saints, and to observe all Mondays, the two Ekādaśīs and the two Pradoṣas as the days of fast.

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[11] KALELKAR, N., *La secte Mānbhav*, (thése de Doctorat), pp. 46, 7.

[12] The Vallabha Panth follows the same custom.

A Vārkarī group is more akin than anything else to a large family as will be evident from the terminology they use to express their relationships within the Panth. The disciples regard themselves as brothers and sisters under the tutelage of their Guru and thus called themselves 'gurubhāū' and 'gurubahiṇ'. In relation to the Guru himself, the disciple is the 'putra' or child of the Guru.

Throughout their life the disciples maintain constant contact between themselves and often gather round their leader, making it a point to attend all 'bhajans' and 'kirtans' which the latter may give. This close connection between the members of the same group is strengthened by the fact that usually they are already connected by family ties or at least caste or professional relationship.

Who can become a Vārkarī ? Theoretically everybody, without distinction of caste or race. Everybody is admitted in the midst of that spiritual family, and history shows that many of the holy men or saints respected by all were of low caste origin. Jñānadeva was, an excommunicated Brahmin, Nāmdeva was a tailor, Gorā a potter, Sāmvatā a gardener, Naraharī a goldsmith, Cokhā a Mahār and Tukārām a Śūdra. Even women attained fame among them; Muktābāi, the sister of Jñānadeva was herself a famous spiritual teacher and the Guru of Cāngdeva, Janābāi, who calls herself the servant of Nāmdev, is one of the most famous and popular poets in Mahārāṣṭra, Kanhopātrā was a dancing girl and Bahiṇābāi the wife of a Brahmin was one of the great disciples of the Śūdra Tukāram.

Now, as before, the Vārkarīs come mostly from the countryside, being farmers, Brahmin landlords or petty officers, craftsmen, and traders. Few of them are from towns and although some wealthy townsmen are found among them, they are mostly shopkeepers and traders from Bombay, Poona and such other towns. Fewer still are drawn from the ranks of the middle class or small businessmen or from the ranks of professional men such as teachers, professors, doctors, and lawyers. But it would be wrong to infer that because of the small number of the latter the panth is losing ground among them. On the contrary, they are beginning to show a noticeable revival of interest for the spiritual teachings of the great Saints of Paṇḍharpūr, which leads some of them to join the Panth. About forty years ago the Vārkarīs were looked upon as a popular movement for the country folk, but under some great leaders such as Nānā Mahārāj Sākhre, Viṣṇubavā Joag, Mr. Deshmukh, Dādāmahārāj Sātarkar or Principal S. V. Dandekar, the panth slowly gained disciples among the intellectuals which promoted a new interest in the study of *Jñāneśvarī* and other philosophical or spiritual works. Independence has given a fresh and strong impetus to this spiritual revival by stimulating the desire to rediscover the hidden national treasures. It must be however acknowledged that the number of disciples from among the intellectuals still remains small, and hardly any University students appear to take interest in the panth or to take part in the pilgrimage.

The Vārkarī movement owes its widespread popularity to its annual pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr which every year attracts huge crowds of pilgrims and onlookers. The towns which lie on the way of the processions and even the smaller villages don for that occasion their festival attire. It is the village fair. Although this popular aspect must not be overlooked the main attraction for the pilgrimage lies still more in the daily 'bhajans' and 'kirtans' performed by the leaders of the pilgrimage, to which people flock by thousands. The seriousness with which the audience listen to the preachers or to the singers reveals how deep is the religious consciousness and the spiritual need of the people, and how fittingly that need is ministered to not only by the teachings of the Vārkarī 'gurus', but also by the manner of that teaching. The devotional atmosphere of these gatherings never fails to leave its mark on those who attend them, and in the simple huts of the villagers, it is not uncommon to hear devotional songs sung by womenfolk as they turn their grindingstone.

After this brief description of the Vārkarī panth itself, it will be useful, in order to complete the picture to give a short history of it also. Details of the historical environment of the panth will be given in the chapters dealing with the Temple of Viṭhobā and the town of Paṇḍharpūr. For an account of its origin and development we shall have to depend on Vārkarī tradition itself, as historical evidence based on authentic records is very scanty. Some of this evidence however will be critically considered in the second part of this study.

One of the characteristics of the Vārkarīs is their special devotion to the god Viṭhobā of Paṇḍharpūr. It is therefore around that temple that we must search for the origin of the panth. The question of the origin of Viṭhobā has not been clearly solved. But we are not concerned with that here. The Vārkarī panth came into being long after the god had been installed in the temple and the question is therefore, "when did Viṭhobā begin to be the centre of this school of spirituality ?"

We have another starting point in our enquiry. The Vārkarī panth is essentially Marāṭhī. As a matter of fact the history of Marāṭhī literature cannot be dissociated from the history of the Vārkarīs. It is chiefly due to the Vārkarī poets that Marāṭhī literature took shape and developed.

These two facts indicate the "terminus a quo". The Vārkarī panth could have begun only after the God of Paṇḍharpūr was known and worshipped by the Marāṭhī speaking people. The cradle of Marāṭhī as a literary language was the country of the upper Godāvarī valley: on the other hand it is probable that the region of Paṇḍharpūr was for a long time a part of the various Kannaḍa empires and a Kannaḍa speaking country. The Marāṭhī language seems to have become firmly established in that part of the Deccan only under the Yādava rulers. It is therefore highly improbable that the Vārkarī panth came into existence before 1187 when Devagiri was founded.

The "terminus ad quem" is given by the dates of Jñāneśvarī as the first Vārkarī recorded by history, and he wrote his masterpiece the Jñāneśvarī in 1290. A strong tradition is recorded in an abhang of Bahiṇābāī[13] stating that he laid the foundation of the Panth. We can therefore safely infer that the panth was already in existence around 1250.

The Vārkarī tradition is unanimous in linking together the names of Viṭhṭhala and of Puṇḍalīka. It is on account of Puṇḍalīka's devotion for his aged parents that Lord Kṛṣṇa came to Paṇḍharpūr and stayed there at his request and became known under the name of Viṭhṭhala. An expression which is found as a *leitmotiv* among all the Vārkarī poets up to the present day runs as follows :

"Puṇḍalīka varada Hari Viṭhṭhala"
"O Hari Viṭhṭhal, who gave a boon to Puṇḍalīka."

It is to Puṇḍalīka that all the Vārkarī Saints feel indebted for the presence of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr and all the blessings that came after. Who was this Puṇḍalīka and when did he live ? It is unfortunately impossible to answer these questions for lack of authentic evidence. The thesis proposed by Karmarkar[14] that Puṇḍalīka was a Kannaḍa 'muni' does not rest on firm grounds. We therefore remain and will probably continue to remain in the dark about him.

However, that tradition was firmly established as far back as the time of Jñānadeva and Nāmdev, who tie together the two names of Puṇḍalīka and of Viṭhṭhala hundreds of times in their abhangs. This may be taken as a confirmation of the fact that Jñānadeva did not found the Vārkarī saṁpradāya. But if he was not the founder of the panth, he was undoubtedly the first and the greatest of its exponents.

There are two traditions concerning the birth place of Jñānadeva not to speak of the controversial question that there were two saints called

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[13] "Jñānadeve racilā pāyā", Bahiṇābāi's Gāthā See :
DANDEKAR, pp. 6 ff.

[14] KARMARKAR, A. P., *Mystic Teachings of the Haridāsas of Karnātaka*, p. 25.

Jñānadeva.[15] The Vārkarī tradition states that he was born at Āḷandī while another tradition gives Apegaon[16] on the Godāvarī as his birth-place. It is historically very difficult to decide between those two places for lack of substantial evidence. We would on our part give preference to Apegaon which is in the same country as all the other places connected with Jñānadeva's childhood. Anyhow, the paternal family of Jñānadeva was living in Apegaon. His father Viṭhṭhalpant married Rakhumābāi the daughter of an inhabitant of Āḷandī. Thus, from the very names of his mother and father we can see that the fame of Viṭhṭhala of Paṇḍharpūr was already well established in those parts, and that the young Jñānadeva had every opportunity to get acquainted with it. An unfortunate event took place before the birth of Jñānadeva and cast a gloomy shadow over his childhood. His father Viṭhṭhalpant although married, longed for the life of a sannyāsī. So one day he left his house and went to Benares where he was initiated. His guru however on learning that Viṭhṭhalpant was a married man and that he had came without his wife's consent who was childless, sent him back to his wife so that he could fulfil his duties towards her by cancelling his initiation and four children were born to them, all to become famous as Spiritual Teachers : Nivṛttinātha, Jñānadeva, Sopānadeva and Muktābāi.

But the Brahmins disapproved of this returning to gṛhastāśrama of Viṭhṭhalpant which they considered to be a breach of the rules of his caste. So when the time came for his sons to undergo the 'upanayana' ceremony, they refused to perform it. He was advised to go to Prayāga and expiate his crime by throwing himself into the Ganges which he did, but even his death did not suffice to abate the resentment of the Brahmins and his children soon found life impossible. They went to Paithan to appeal to the Brahmanical authorities of that place, but met with no success in winning over their judges. However the young Jñānadeva showed such miraculous power that it gained them the respect and admiration even of their judges. It is not recorded whether finally they were allowed to undergo the upanayana ceremony and thus we do not know for certain whether Jñānadeva was a consecrated Brahmin or not.

The fame of the young children spread rapidly and they were very soon regarded as protected by God. They seem to have settled for some time at Nevasa where Jñānadeva wrote his immortal book the Jñāneśvarī and some time after, on the request of Nivṛttinātha, the Amṛtānubhava.

It must be noticed in this connection that all the places mentioned above i.e. Nasik, Trimbak, Paiṭhan, Nevasa, and also the paternal family place Apegaon, are all situated in the Godāvarī valley. This part of the

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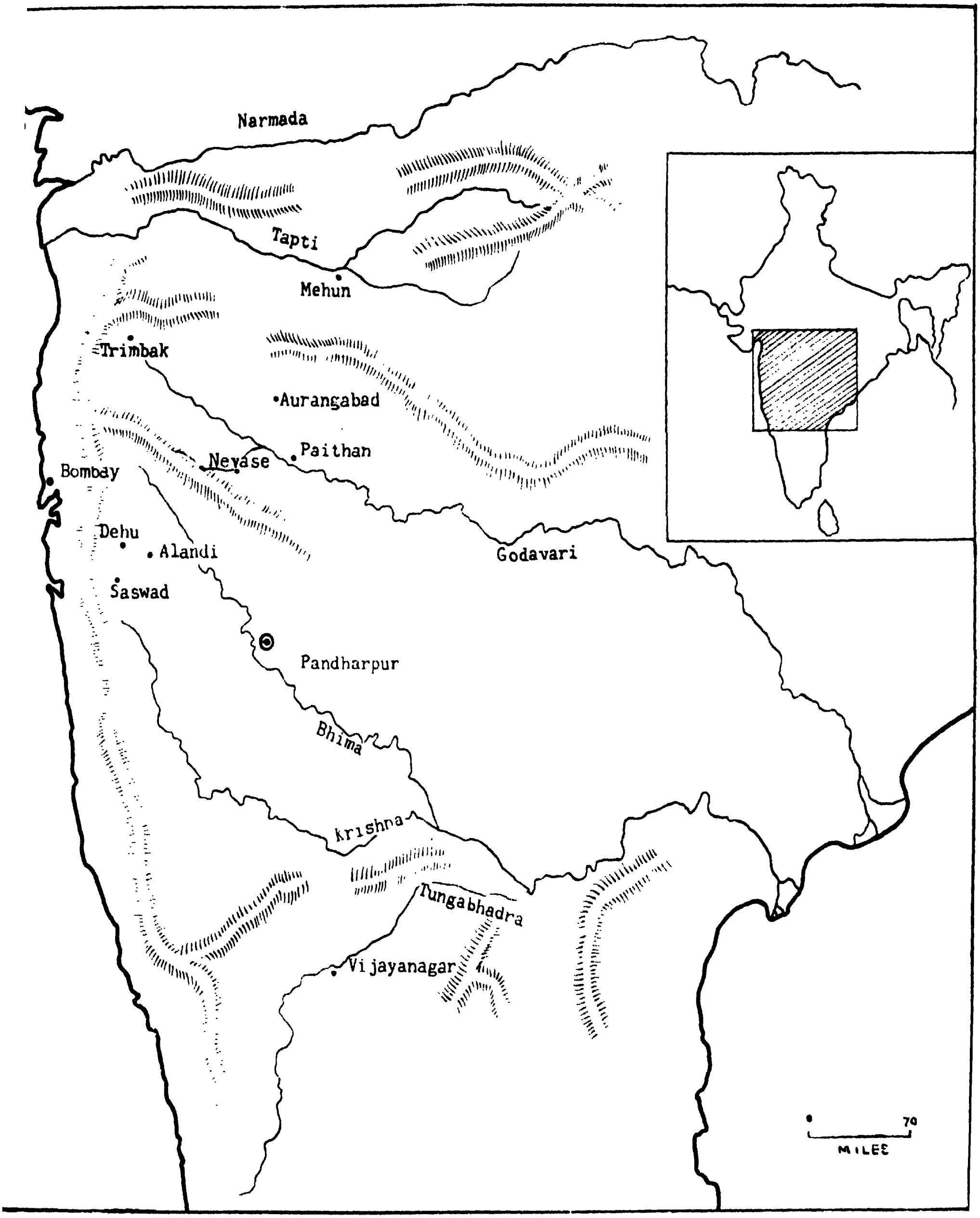
[15] See : **Bharade, S. A.**, *Jñānadeva āṇi Jñāneśvara.*

[16] **Ranade, R. D.**, *Mysticism in Mahārāṣṭra*, p. 31.

Plate 1.


Narmada
Tapti
Mehun
Trimbak
Aurangabad
Paithan
Nevase
Bombay
Dehu
Alandi
Saswad
Godavari
Pandharpur
Bhima
Krishna
Tungabhadra
Vijayanagar
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MILES

Sacred places of the Varkaris

Deccan was the cradle of Marāṭhī literature. The Yadavas who were local rulers at first were Maraṭhī speaking people. When they became independent and attained sovereign power they made their mother tongue the official language of their dominion. The family seat of the Yādavas was at Devagiri in the Godāvarī valley and we find that all the first Marāṭhī writers come also from that area. The Court of Devagiri became not only the administrative centre of a large dominion, but also a rapidly growing cultural centre. The latter half of the thirteenth century saw the flowing of a powerful cultural movement. The personality of Hemādrī, a political figure as well as a literary man is a good illustration of this revival. Playing the part of a Maecenas, he gave his name to a new style of architecture, the ruins of which can be seen to-day spread over the whole of Mahārāṣṭra. He is said to have patronised the introduction of a new script called the Moḍī in order to make writing and reading easier to learn than the Nāgarī script.

The oldest literary works written in Marāṭhī date from this period. The Chaupadi of Cakradhar written in Paiṭhan was composed in 1264.[17] Nāgdev was born at Puri in the Bīda district.[18] The Līlācaritra was written in 1270 at Sāroḷe in Ahmednagar.[19] Bhāskarvyās, author of the Śiśupālavadha was an inhabitant of Kasar Bori in Parbhani,[20] Śrī Bhavedev Vyās of Nevāsā in Ahmednagar,[21] Lakṣmendra Bhaṭ of Deūlvāḍā in Elichpur,[22] Nivṛttidev of Vāṭoḍā in Daryapur and so on. All these village belong to the same ancient kingdom of Devagiri. It must also be noted that all these writers belonged to the Mahānubhāva sect which seems to have exerted a very strong influence at that time in the Godāvarī valley.

It is in that culturally creative period that Jñānadeva was born, and the wanderings of his childhood took him over the whole country where Marāṭhī literature was putting forth its first bloom. He had then every opportunity to get acquainted with the religious controversies raging between the supporters of the Mahānubhāva school of thought and the followers of the Nātha sect of the Yogis as well as with their common opposition to the orthodox element trying to preserve the esoterism of the Sanskrit culture. As a matter of fact his brother Nivṛttinātha who initiated him in spiritual ways, was a disciple of a Nātha yogī of Trimbak. This intellectual as well as spiritual environment gave to the gifted young man the opportunity to develop his talents and to become in a very short time a master among his elders.

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[17] DESHPANDE, Y. K., *Marathi Literature of the Mahānubhāva*, p. 11.

[18] Ibid., p. 13.

[19] Ibid., p. 14.

[20] Ibid., p. 16.

[21] Ibid., p. 21.

[22] Ibid., p. 23.

It is unfortunately difficult to get a true picture of the life of Jñānadeva, for in the traditional accounts available events which may be historically true are inextricably mixed with happenings obviously apocryphal. For instance tradition tells us that Jñānadeva was fifteen years old when he wrote the Jñāneśvarī, or according to another tradition nineteen. That the nine thousand verses of the Jñāneśvarī were written by a mere boy seems incredible: they bespeak a literary and philosophical maturity more appropriate to age than to extreme youth, and some critics may be forgiven therefore if they cast doubt on the historical veracity of this tradition.

However, after having completed the writing of the Jñāneśvarī and the Amṛtānubhāva at Nevāsa in Ahmednagar, Jñānadeva together with his brothers and sister went to Āḷandī near Poona. Although settled down to live there in the house of his mother's family he often undertook pilgrimages to Paṇḍharpūr as well as to other holy places in India. This coming of Jñānadeva to Āḷandī and Paṇḍharpūr was the greatest event in the history of the Vārkarī panth. Sanskrit had been till then the sole medium of cultural expression. Jñānadeva broke with this custom. By working in Marāṭhī, he brought within reach of the common people the understanding of their old Sanskrit heritage, and also made it possible for them to realise their national culture which had been taking shape at the court of Devagiri.

Thus, when he attached himself to the Bhakti movement of Paṇḍharpūr, he endowed it not only with the new medium of expression of the living Marāṭhī language, but also with a sound philosophical background borrowed from the Sanskrit tradition. It seems that at that time Jñānadeva underwent a deep spiritual transformation, reaching the height of his spiritual and mystical stature and planting his feet firmly on the royal road of bhakti. The abhangs which he wrote then are witness to the path he was treading. Far from being in doctrinal opposition with the Jñāneśvarī, they appear to be a fulfilment on the mystical level of all the philosophical tendencies of his former work. The fact that Jñāneśvarī became the "Book" of the Vārkarīs and their philosophical Bible, and has remained so up to our days is an adequate indication that there are no doctrinal discrepancies between it and the abhangs.

According to the traditional account of his life, Jñānadeva entered 'samādhi' at the age of twenty-two, which would limit his stay in the Āḷandī-Paṇḍharpūr region to only three years. During this short period of time, he wrote more than one thousand abhangs, made many disciples, had a miraculous spiritual battle with a famous Śaiva yogi Cāngdev, converted another Śaiva devotee Visobā Khecara who persecuted him at first, and who in his turn initiated Nāmdev with whom Jñānadeva set out on an extensive tour of all the sacred places of India.

Jñānadeva and his family were the first Vārkarī missionaries. Due to their impetus the new panth began to spread all over Mahārāṣṭra, the extent of which may be seen from the various places in which they settled down and eventually entered Samadhi : Nivṛttinātha went back to Trimbak near Nasik where he had been initiated by the Nātha yogi and entered samadhi near a pond on the way to the Godāvarī spring. Jñānadeva at Āḷandī, Sopānadeva at Sāsvaḍ in Poona and Muktābāi at Mehun in Khandesh. Thus as early as the thirteenth century the Vārkarī panth was spread over the country which has remained its traditional zone of influence.

We have already come across the name of Nāmdev and we must now deal with his life, for he is the next great Vārkarī recorded by tradition.[23] The village where his parents, tailor by caste, were living was Narsingpur in Hyderabad. After a stormy beginning, his life was transformed by his conversion to the Bhakti faith. He was initiated by Visobā Khecara and accompanied Jñānadeva in his wanderings throughout India. He then settled down in Paṇḍharpūr where he became the most enterprising champion of the new panth. All these data are borrowed from tradition and there is no historical evidence to support them, but we must be satisfied with them until research can produce more authentic evidence to put an end to the controversies connected with his biography. It seems clear however, whether he was contemporary with Jñānadeva or not, that Nāmdev was living long after the saint of Āḷandī was dead. He was one of the more forceful figures of his time : the passionate trend of his temperament which led him in his youth to unfortunate deeds made of him after his conversion a natural leader. His kirtans soon became famous, and through his voice the name of Viṭhṭhala became known in distant places. Narasi Mehta in his "Haramālā" records the deeds of Nāmdev,[24] and some of his works became a part of the "Granthasāheb", the sacred book of the Sikhs.

From a study of the abhangs written at that time, we are able to see that the Vārkarī panth was organised on the same lines as it is now. The great festivals of Paṇḍharpūr were the Ekādaśīs of Kārtika and Āṣāḍha. "I'll not miss the Kārtikīs and the Āṣāḍhīs" says Nāmdev in one of his abhangs,[25] and Jñānadeva in another abhang[26] describes the pilgrims on their way to Paṇḍharpūr, wearing the 'Tulasīmālā' and carrying the ochre-coloured banner, or playing the 'Vīṇā', the 'Tāḷ' or the 'Mṛdaṅga'. Janābāi records the success of the Kirtans.[27]

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[23] DANDEKAR, p. 16.

[24] "Pāndurangaśarmā."

[25] Nāmdev, S. S. Gāthā, No. 1806.

[26] Jñānadeva, S. S., Gāthā, No. 205.

So, the modern pilgrim to Paṇḍharpūr singing on his way the hymns written by these poets follows perhaps without knowing it a tradition more than five hundred years old. And the pādukas of Jñānadeva which are carried to-day in procession from Āḷandī to Paṇḍharpūr follow more or less the same road that his own feet trod when he was living.

The golden era of the Yādavas of Devagiri was succeeded by a dark period in Mahārāṣṭra. The armies of Alla-ud-din Khilji crossed the Narmadā at the beginning of the fourteenth century and broke out into the Deccan. Temples and images were destroyed, and this iconoclastic vandalism did not spare Paṇḍharpūr, which for a time was even deprived of the image of Viṭhobā. Bhānudās is reported to have brought it back to Paṇḍharpūr.

Bhānudās was like Jñānadeva a native of the upper Godāvarī valley of Deśastha Brahmin family. He was born in about 1448 A.D. at Paiṭhan, the old capital on the banks of the Godāvarī. Known for his legendary mission to Vijayānagar, he became famous also as the great-grand-father of Eknāth. It seems that Bhānudās was responsible for a slight transformation in the customs of the Vārkarīs. Before him the more important of the two pilgrimages in Āṣāḍha and Kārtika was the Āṣāḍhī ekādaśī pilgrimage. But owing to the fact that when bearing Viṭhobā's image back to Paṇḍharpūr he arrived there on the ekādaśī of Kārtika, the latter date therefore became more important than the former.

There is no historical evidence to support the dates of birth and death of Eknāth, who according to the tradition was born in 1533 A.D. and entered 'samādhi' in 1599.[28] His life must thus have covered most of the sixteenth century which was also a dark period for the Hindus of the Deccan. The Muslim rulers of the Bahamani Kingdom had been generally tolerant. But, when towards the end of the fifteenth century this kingdom broke up and disintegrated into the five Sultanates of the Deccan, conditions changed for the worse. Continually at war between themselves or against their mighty Hindu neighbour of Vijayānagar, the five Sultanates not only exhausted the country in providing for their armies, but launched several cruel persecutions against their Hindu subjects.

[27] Janābāi, S. S., Gāthā, No. 177.

[28] RANADE, *Mysticism* etc., p. 214.

Eventually the Muslims combined to attack the great Hindu Kingdom of the south and overthrew it at the fateful battle of Tālikoṭ in 1565 A.D. The last hope and refuge of Hinduism was crushed on that day and the dominance of Muslim rule established over practically the whole of Southern India. Compelled to make the best of their misfortune, many Hindus in time took service with their Muslim masters. It was during such troublous time that Eknāth was born, lived and died.

His family home was in Paiṭhan and but for pilgrimages to Paṇḍharpūr it was there that he spent practically his whole life, except for a few years during boyhood when he left family and home without a warning and became the disciple of Janārdana Swāmi, a Holy man living in Daulatabad. Janārdana was respected by Hindus and Muslims alike, so much so that the Muslim King had placed him in charge of the fort. The young Eknāth was initiated and for six years remained with his 'guru' whom he served with great devotion. There it was that he got acquainted with the spiritual literature of the Vārkarīs, and specially with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Jñāneśvarī which he adopted for his 'Bible'.

Following the commands of his 'guru' he went back to Paiṭhan where he soon married. But his aim remained unchanged and he lived an ascetic life, although remaining in the midst of his family. His literary achievements are extremely valuable. Collecting some old manuscripts he brought out a critical edition of Jñāneśvarī which is still followed by subsequent editors. Since the time of its first publication, Jñāneśvarī, on account of its popularity, had not been spared orthographical errors and interpolations. Eknāth wished to restore to his readers the most authentic text. Some have suggested that his edition was the recasting of the original text into a modern form. But that seems very unlikely since the idea of changing even one letter would have been in his eyes unfaithful and contrary to his aim. Eknāth also published a large number of books, of which the more popular, besides many abhangs, are the "Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa" and a commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. He occupies a very important place among the Vārkarī poets, for in those critical times he not only preserved from destruction the tradition of the panth, but enlarged its background by translating into Marāṭhī some of the most important Sanskrit works.

Eknāth made his whole life a living example of what he taught. His mode of life was in a way a new lesson to the Vārkarīs. Jñānadeva and his family as well as Nāmdev had been ascetics following the traditional path of the wandering 'sādhu'. Nāmdev wrote:[29]

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[29] Nāmdev, quoted by RANADE, p. 195.

> "If it had been possible for him to see God while carrying on the duty of a house-holder, the great Śuka would not have gone to the forest to seek God. Had it been possible for people to find God in their homes, they would not have left them to find out God. Nāmdev says that he has left all these things, and is approaching God in utter submission."

On the contrary Eknāth showed that it was possible to remain in one's own family and yet to reach God. This teaching was understood and followed by his disciples. It must be admitted, however, that this path to sanctification is not an easy one, and even Tukārām failed to follow it with the same success as Eknāth. But, although his example was hard to follow literally, its principle endowed the Vārkarī panth with one aspect which distinguishes it from other sects. That principle was that holiness was not the prerogative of Sannyāsīs only, but that anyone could attain to it in the course and in the midst of his daily life. Even the concept of the 'sannyāsī' hitherto a solitary wanderer begging his way to holy places or a recluse given up to meditation away from all human contacts, was given a new meaning, according to which he was expected to be a preacher, a spiritual guide existing as a living example in the midst of his followers.

The end of the sixteenth century witnessed an important turn in the history of Mahārāṣṭra. Deprived with the fall of Vijayānagar, of all hopes of protection from that once powerful kingdom, the Hindus were compelled to realise that only by their own strength could they rise again and achieve independence. Political subjugation and religious oppression combined to awaken in the Marāṭhā people a new sense of unity and of spiritual strength. The determination grew to preserve their faith at all costs and it was that unity of purpose which taught men to be selfless and laid the foundations of Marāṭhā nationalism.

The Vārkarī panth played no small part in that revival. Their saints preached a high standard of moral behaviour and helped the people to keep intact a simple but moral way of life which conserved their strength. Then by clinging to the Marāṭhī language the Vārkarī not only preserved from destruction the national treasures of an old tradition, but they successfully built an embankment against the tides of the official language of the Muslim courts.

It is true to say that Rāmdās and his followers were more directly connected with the Marāṭha resurgence. The Rāmdāsī panth was a politico-

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[30] SARDESAI, G. S., *Main Currents of Maratha History*, p. 11.

[31] DEMING, W. S., *Rāmdās and the Rāmdāsis.*

religious sect which openly preached revolt and supported Śivājī from the very commencement of his career, while the Vārkarīs, with Tukārām, never allowed political considerations to intrude into their spiritual mission. However, the influence and existence of the Rāmdāsī panth was short lived, and when independence was achieved, it began to disintegrate as quickly as it had spread due probably to the fact that its political purpose had been completely served. In contrast, the Vārkarī panth, continued not only to survive but to remain active as the preserver of national solidarity. The influence of the panth helped to counteract the natural tendency of the Marāṭhas to allow personal interest to prevail over their devotion to the national interest once the latter was no longer threatened.

Those times of national revival were fertile in great men. Śivājī and Rāmdâs are among the greatest sons of Mahārāṣṭra, and the Vārkarīs are proud to have added to them another and no less important namely, Tukārām.

Though 1650 A.D. is accepted by most of his biographers as the date on which Tukārām's earthly life came to an end, no unanimity has been reached concerning the date of his birth. We can however state that his life covered practically the first half of the seventeenth century. He belonged to a poor Śūdra family of Dehū, where he was born, lived and died or according to tradition mysteriously disappeared. Although he was married and had a family he felt all his life the longing for the detached life of a 'sannyāsī'. His spiritual greatness was soon recognised by the people and he had at first to suffer the bitter persecutions of the Brahmins, jealous of his influence. Nor was his family life free from worries and domestic troubles. Anyhow his poems and his 'kirtans' soon spread his fame over the surrounding country and his popularity has never diminished from that time onward. His humble and passionate devotion for the Lord of Paṇḍharī still touches the hearts of the pilgrims to Paṇḍarpūr and most of the songs they sing on their way are abhangs of his composition.

Tukārām certainly played a great part in the spreading of the Vārkarī panth amongst the people of the villages and of the country. Sprung from the common people, they regarded him as one of themselves and they gathered around him then as they flock today around his temple. Even Brahmins who at first had looked upon him with resentment and envy came to acknowledge his spiritual greatness and some became his disciples, among whom Bahiṇābāi and Niḷobā are the more famous.[32] He gave to the annual pilgrimage on Āśāḍha Ekādaśī a new impetus and in some of his abhangs he describes the occasion as a great feast and as a great fair.[33]

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[32] Bahiṇābāi, (Abbot's ed.) No. 46.

Jñānadeva and Tukārām are the two great names among the Vārkarīs and recognised as such by them. One of the most frequent refrains which from time to time occurs between the singing of the hymns during the pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr is the continuous repetition of the names "Jñānbā Tukārām". And yet what a difference there is between the two saints. Jñānadeva was a Brahmin, Tukārām a Śūdra: Jñānadeva was a cultured man well versed in all the scriptures "one who has read the four Vedas", Tukārām was a villager brought up among villagers far from any intellectual or philosophical circle. Jñānadeva brought up by a father who had been a sannyāsī was initiated in his early childhood. Tukārām was meant to be a merchant to carry on his father's shop, and was initiated later in life in a dream. Jñānadeva was a Brahmacārī, Tukārām had to marry and to beget children. And yet in spite of all the differences there is a spiritual affiliation between the two Saints.

Jñānadeva appears in a dream to Rameśvarbhaṭṭa, a bitter enemy of Tukārām, and orders him to go and become the latter's disciple: he appears in the same way to another Brahmin of Āḷandī and tells him to go to Tukārām to be initiated. Tukārām on his part held in great veneration the Saint of Āḷandī and often refers to him in his abhangs. The common ground on which those two Saints meet is naturally their passionate devotion for Viṭhobā.

Tukārām had many disciples and fourteen "Tāl-bearers", who always stayed by him playing their ṭāl while he was giving Kirtans.[34] Among those fourteen was Niḷobā, a Brahmin of the village Pimpalner of which he was the Kulkarni. One day when he had been asked to some meeting by his officer, he realised that he did not wish to be a servant any longer and he left Pimpalner and his office. He went to Dehū and there meeting one of Tukārām's sons he fulfilled his devotions together with him, but without feeling any alleviation of his anxieties. Then upon advice he undertook a fast of forty days, at the end of which he saw Tukārām in a dream, and was initiated by him. From that day he dedicated his life to preaching and giving kirtans and writing abhangs whose refined style still rejoices the Vārkarīs. Many of those hymns are in commemoration of Tukārām and sing his praise and many of them are nearly as popular among the Vārkarīs as the abhangs of his Guru Tukārām himself.

The impetus given to the Panth by Tukārām was strengthened by the creation of the Marāṭhā Svarāj. During the expedition of Śivājī against Tanjore and Jinjī, and even long before when his father was serving the Muslims of Bijapur in the South, many Marāṭha families settled down in those places and along the route to the South. Some of those families were devoted to Viṭhobā and the fame of the Saints thus spread in those countries. Several temples dedicated to Viṭhobā were also built there. Still the Vārkarī movement never became a state patronized institution. Already Tukārām had refused to become the official chaplain of Śivājī. This non-political attitude seems to have become a traditional feature of the Panth. True some of the Peshwas did bestow various jagirs on prominent Vārkarīs, but they themselves never became Vārkarīs. Some of them were openly hostile to this popular movement and Bājīrao II did not hesitate to use the holy Temple of Paṇḍharpūr in a plot which resulted in the murder of Gangādhar Śāstrī.[35]

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[33] DANDEKAR, pp. 33, 4.

[34] Ibid., p. 37.

What ensured the lasting influence of the Panth was the succession of many holy men who up to our times have carried on the old tradition started by Jñānadeva while the Rāmdāsis spread all over Mahārāṣṭra within a very short time their Panth was strictly composed of Brahmins and the movement did not long outlast its founder. But the Vārkarī Panth consisting largely of common people retained popular support. And if no personality of the stature of Tukārām has sprung up among them within the last two centuries and although in a way the creative spirit seems to have weakened among them, they have nevertheless survived, and exist as a live force of Mahārāṣṭra to-day, by reason of their devotion to their great Saints of the past as well as by the spiritual influence of their 'gurus'.

Among those who contributed not only in preventing but in popularising the spirit of the panth, Mahipati deserves a special mention. He was born in 1715 in a Brahman family at Taharabad in Ahmednagar district. His father held some office under the Muslim overlords of Hyderabad and Mahipati succeeded him in that office. But soon not being able to bear this dependence he resigned and dedicated his life to the study of the lives and works of the great bhakti saints, especially those belonging to the Vārkarī Panth. The outcome of those studies was a number of books written in a very simple and flowing style and in the verse form. They are: Santa Līlāmrita, Bhakta Līlāmrita, Bhakta Vijaya, etc. In these books he wrote down all the biographical stories and legends of the Saints as far as he was able to gather them. Although the student of history may have to discriminate while reading them, they nevertheless remain a unique source of information. Those biographies were widely read and contributed in no mean measure to keep people in touch with the precepts and examples of the 'gurus' of the past.

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[35] SARDESAI, G. S., *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. III, pp. 459 ff.

With the growing number of the Vārkarīs and the absence of centralised organization, several smaller groups sprang forth from the various disciples of Tukārām. It would be improper to call those groups successions from the main body or even sub-groups. They are merely groups of disciples, followers of the teachings of their particular 'Gurus'—living or dead—differing not at all in their adherence to the main doctrine, but only in the interpretation of minor points and adoption of different mantras. The spiritual successors of Tukārām were Niḷobā, then Śankaraswāmi of Sirur, then Mallapā Vāskar (1709-1799). From the latter sprang the group called Vāskar and from Gopalabuvā the great grandson of Tukārām, the group named the Dehūkars. The three other main groups are the Ajrekar, the Gangukākā and the Thākūrbhuvā. Among the prominent Vārkarīs of the modern times we may mention the names of Khaṇḍojī Bābā of Poona, Puṇḍalīkbuvā Jālojīmālojī, Prahlād Bhāu Baḍve, Thākorbuvā, Bābā Pādhye, Mārtaṇḍa māmā of Paiṭhan, Mārtaṇḍabāpu of Āḷandī, Vāsudevbhuvā of Dehū, Sakhārāmbuvā of Amalner, Bābā Ajarekar, Cārtumāsyebuvā, Gangukākā, Lakṣmaṇbuvā of Wākhrī, etc.[36]

Among them, special mention must be made of Haibatrao[37] of Ārphal in Satara, for he is responsible for the feast of the Pālkhis as it is held now. He was a rich Sardar. Once, on his way back from Gwalior he was caught by a band of dacoits and confined in a cave. In his despair he had recourse to Jñānadeva who listened to him, and he was released. In gratefulness he took up his stay at Āḷandī where he bestowed many gifts on the Vārkarīs. Long before his time the 'Pādukās' of Jñānadeva were carried to Paṇḍharpūr but the real organisation of the procession is due to him. He gave to the procession a pālkhī, a bullock cart to put it on and other things and he organised also the different diṇḍīs. Thus the procession of Jñānadeva was the first to be organised. Afterwards many others were started to commemorate the memory of different saints or holy men; but most of them were created within the last fifty years. Further information concerning those 'pālkhis' will be given in the chapter on the Pilgrimage.

The key to the history and evolution of the Vārkarī panth and of its surprising continuity lies in the uninterrupted succession of 'gurus' and disciples. The development has come from the inside and was not due to external influence. It was of interest to ascertain if the impact of the West had had any influence on them during the last hundred years, but it will be evident from their history as we have given it above that the panth has developed along its own lines without feeling that impact in the least. Its mark was left however on others as we shall see from the brief sketch of the Prārthanā Samāj which follows. This sketch is not out of place here as that Samāj, an offshoot of the Brahmo samāj, is using for prayer many an abhang from the Vārkarī saints.

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[36] DANDEKAR, p. 40.
[37] Ibid., p. 39.

As one could have guessed it, the Prārthanā Samāj started in Bombay, the one place in Western India where European influence has been the strongest. It began as a reaction against caste distinctions. Some Brahmins founded a secret society for the abolition of castes and called it the "Paramhaṅsa Samāj" in 1849. The initiatory ceremony was, symbolically, the partaking of a meal cooked by a non-Brahmin. The distinguished scholar Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar was initiated in 1853. The meetings were secret and as S. Sastri puts it, it was a "freemasonry of reformers." Its more influential members were, besides R. G. Bhandarkar, Ātmārām Pāṇḍurang Tarkhad and B. M Vāgle.[38]

An unfortunate happening in 1860 caused the dissolution of the Society : the roll with the names of the members was stolen, and fearing that the publication of this list would bring them into trouble, the members preferred to scatter. But their ideal of reforming their social environment was still living. In 1864 the famous Bengali missionary Keshub Chunder Sen delivered a series of lectures in Bombay and Poona. His enthusiastic speeches found a ready audience in the former members of the Paramhaṅsa Samāj and in 1866 Ātmārām Pāndurang started a society aimed at the public promotion of several social reforms. His programme consisted of four points; preaching the evil of the caste system, the remarriage of widows, education for women and abolition of child marriage.

The founders soon came to the conclusion that in order to ensure the success of their undertaking, it had to be based on religious principles. V. A. Modak and R. G. Bhandarkar were the originators of that idea. They decided to found a society for "promoting the spiritual worship of the only true God," and for fighting against all forms of idolatry. In 1867 the first prayer meeting took place and in 1870, while Mr. M. G. Ranade was secretary, one of the members married a young widow. In 1871, Mr. Ranade was transferred from Bombay to Poona. He found there in existence a Prārthanā Samāj founded the year before by Chintārām Sakhārām Chitnis, and he soon became the soul of the new society. Several cultural Brahmins joined the society, namely M. M. Kunte, G. V. Joshi, K. P. Godbole and Paṇḍitā Ramābāi. In 1881 R. G. Bhandarkar was appointed Professor at the Deccan College, and became one of the more influential members of the Samāj. The society dedicated

Sivanāth SASTRI, *History of the Brahmo-Samaj*, 2.411.

itself to the spread of education and to the work of uplift among the outcastes and the destitutes.

In spite of several attempts made by the Brāhmo Samāj to include the new society in their Church, the Prārthanā Samāj always refused to merge with their Bengali sister. They wanted to preserve the integrity of their religious convictions, the chief tenets of their faith being the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men. Those fundamental principles were set in an essentially Marāṭhī background. Not only were the ceremonies, rites and prayers in Marāṭhī, but they chose as their master Tūkārām.

They wanted to be the true followers of Tukārām who suffered from and fought against the caste system. Eager as they were to follow the spiritual teachings of the Saint of Dehu they never allowed the least trace of idolatry to enter into their prayers. They wanted a purified religion, and even when singing the abhangs of Tukārām they took care to replace the name Viṭhṭhala by the unequivoqual name of Deva, God.

They took their religious inspiration not only from the works of Tukārām but also from all the great religious traditions of the world. Says Bhandarkar,[39] "We must learn from all the sources available to us, indigenous as well as foreign, ... we accept the best portions of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā, the teachings of the medieval saints, supplemented by certain ideas from Buddhism as well as from the Bible."[40]

This society claimed to be the true successor of Tukārām and of the Saints of Paṇḍharpūr. Yet the official successors of those saints — the Vārkarīs have always looked upon them with suspicion, and regard them as heretics. The Samāj considered the worship of the various Gods "Rāma, Krishna, Viṭhobā, Śiva, Mahākāla, Bhairava, Khaṇḍobā,"[41] and others as idolatry. Such a view was obviously not in keeping with the passionate devotion to Viṭhobā so characteristic of the Vārkarī tradition and the Samajists are therefore considered by the Vārkarīs as the Protestants are considered by the Catholics i.e. well-intentioned people carried astray by intellectual delusions. And indeed the Samāj remained the religion of the few, although those few may be extremely influential. The Vārkarīs on the other hand have a large popular audience although the number of intellectuals among them seems to be steadily increasing. They essentially depend on tradition wherein lies their strength, but at the same time their conservatism in the midst of a society which is undergoing rapid evolution may be a weakness that may possibly affect their future.

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[39] BHANDARKAR, R. G., Basis of Theism, and its relation to the so-called Revealed Religions, in Collected Works, 2.615.

[40] Ibid., 2.623.

[41] Ibid., 2.614.

Moreover, to rely only on tradition is also a weakness, in our days of scientific urge. The new generations are no longer satisfied with legendary accounts of the lives of the Santas or with the traditional commentaries on their teachings. In that chapter, we have followed the traditional account of the history of the Panth, as given by the Vārkarīs themselves; whether this account gives us a true historical picture of their past is at yet impossible to decide. Non-Vārkarī scholars, as Pr. G. H. KHARE[42] or Mr. V. S. BENDRE[43] are questioning it very seriously. It is heartily hoped that some research scholars among the Vārkarīs themselves will start substantiating their tradition by scientific historical data. The life of each santa is yet to be written, in spite of the huge literature concerning them.

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[42] KHARE, G. H., *Srī Viṭhṭhala āṇi Paṇḍharpūr*,

[43] BENDRE, V. S., *Dehu Darśana*,

CHAPTER II

PANDHARPUR

Again and again in their songs, the poets of Mahārāṣṭra extol the greatness and the beauty of Paṇḍharpūr. Bahiṇābāi for instance gives the following description of the town :

Sarvāṅgavyāpinī

1.
Such is the glory of the Bhīmā river, pervading all our being,
That Brahmā is speechless when attempting to describe it.

2.
Blessed are the fortune people of Paṇḍharī,
Who enjoy the happiness that the love of Viṭhobā brings.

3.
It is here that the Bhīmā and the Candrabhāgā unite,
How can one sufficiently praise their glory ?

4.
Besides this, the God of Paṇḍharī is there.
How can I describe my feelings at the glory of the sacred place ?

5.
Where these three meet,
How can one sufficiently describe its glory ?

6.
Should one listen to the description of its glory,
There would be no sin even in one's dreams.

7.
Where bathing, gifts, and the vision of God take place,
What can births and deaths do ?

8.
There is no measurement of time as day and night :
There is always light here.

9.
Even the gods come together here to bathe,
Riding here at mid-day in their Vimāṇas,

10.

Who can describe the limits of the glory of that sacred place,
But a sinful man residing there does not know it.

11.

Blessed is Puṇḍalīka ! Blessed his devotion !
Through him the sacred place experienced its greatness.

12.

Says Bahiṇī,
One must have a stock of puṇya to meet Viṭhobā.

Thus speaks Bahiṇābāi and all the other saints with her. Paṇḍharpūr for the pilgrim is the abode of peace and bliss; the poets call it "Bhūvaikuṇṭha" or the paradise on earth.

This holy city is situated on the right bank of the meandering Bhīmā, the main tributary of the upper-Kṛṣṇā. It rises at Bhīmāśankar in the Sahyādri range, about fifty miles North-West of Poona, and meets the Kṛṣṇā about sixteen miles North of Raichur in the Nizam's territory, after a south-eastward run of nearly four hundreds miles. The city is at its best after the monsoon. The river then full and traversed by many boats with bright horse figure-heads may be seen, like the crescent of the moon, curving gently along its banks crowded with shrines and temples, and embracing in its yellow waters the two white islet-temples of Viṣṇupada and Nārada. To the tired pilgrim, reaching at last his goal after a long journey, Paṇḍharpūr indeed looks like a green oasis of peace, "a Paradise on earth."

The town lies more or less in the centre of the large drain basin of the Bhīmā and upper-Kṛṣṇā rivers. This basin is bounded on the north by the long range of the Bālāghāṭs, on the west by the stiff wall of the Sahyādri mountains, on the south by the Gāndhārvaḍ range and on the east it slopes into the low plains of the eastern coastline in the shape of several valleys. Its general shape is that of an open fan—edged by the Sahyādri range which throws eastward many spurs dividing the upper basin into several smaller valleys. These valleys finally merge into a vast open plain around Paṇḍharpūr. This plain forms the southern part of Mahārāṣṭra, although the boundary line between the Marāṭhī and the Kannaḍa languages passes not far east of the town of Paṇḍharpūr.

This geographical situation has given Paṇḍharpūr its historical importance. It lies at the junction of several important lines of communication where the roads coming from Ahmadnagar, Poona, Kolhāpūr, Bijāpūr and Solāpūr converge. However, the great railway line which connects Bombay and Madras does not go through Paṇḍharpūr but runs some 20 miles to the east of it. There is however a small branch line *from the Kurduwadi Station on the Central Railway which passes through the town of Paṇḍharpūr, connecting the Central Railway line with Southern Railway line at Miraj.* At the time of the pilgrimages these *small railway lines are not able* to cope up with the crowds of pilgrims, but this shortcoming is made up by special trains and numerous service buses.

From the agricultural point of view the country is not very rich, although the soil in itself would be fertile if there had been a good rain. The main crops are cotton and millets, Jowār and Bājrā. The production of rice is negligible. In comparison with the rich coastal plain of Konkan, the Paṇḍharpūr country looks rather poor, but compared with the surroundings on the Sahyādri side it looks almost a land of plenty. The Kuṇbī or Marāṭhā peasant does not get rich easily and has to toil hard to get his living. The climate on other hand is very healthy.

The country immediately surrounding Paṇḍharpūr is relatively rich. Along the banks of the Bhīmā the deep black soil is specially fine. Most of the country is under tillage and sometimes yields a double crop. The main crop by far is the millet called Jowār which covers nearly 70% of the tilled land; the grain is ground and prepared into a kind of bread called Bhākar, the staple food of the inhabitants. The Bājra, another kind of millet, covers only 7 or 8% of the tilled land. Wheat and rice are not common. Ālshī or linseed is cultivated for its oil. Finally there are small areas under plantation for cotton, sugar-cane and even tobacco.

The geographical situation of Paṇḍharpūr is partly responsible for its troubled history. The inhabitants of the surrounding hills were for ever tempted to raid this more fertile land and the successive dynasties which ruled over the Deccan were always eager to annex it to their own dominion. Situated on the easiest road connecting the northern Deccan with southern India, the town itself had a strategic importance although it was difficult to protect against raiders or invading armies. Moreover, a glance at the historical map of India will show that it was placed dangerously near the political centre of the Deccan, and it was therefore bound to be mixed up with the political struggles of the successive kingdoms whose seats were in Mālkhed, Kalyāṇī, Gulbargā, Bedar, Bijāpūr, and even Badāmī.

The oldest mention of Paṇḍharpūr is in an inscription dating as far back as 516 A.D.[1] Before this date we can only infer the history of Paṇḍharpūr from the general history of Mahārāṣṭra. By Mahārāṣṭra to-day, we mean that part of the Deccan between the Narmadā and the Tungabhadrā rivers where the Marāṭhī language is prevalent. But we must be warned against the idea that Mahārāṣṭra has always been what it is now. Its boundaries have changed in the course of time, and it is almost certain that the Mahārāṣṭra of the time of Pulakeśin does not coincide with the Mahārāṣṭra of 1952. The border line of the Marāṭhī language is still fluent and moving steadily southward.

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[1] *MAD* (1929) pp. 198 ff.

We must also be aware of the fact that the language of the inscriptions does not necessarily represent the language of the places where those inscriptions have been found, as usually they were written in the official language of the ruling dynasties of the time. For instance, although one inscription in Śrāvaṇa Beḷgoḷa was written in Marāṭhī, that language was never spoken in that part of the Deccan. In the same way, Mahārāṣṭra is covered with inscriptions in Urdu, when that language was never the mother-tongue of the Marāṭhās. A chronological study of the place-names could only settle the question of the extent of Mahārāṣṭra for any given period. Until such a study is completed, opinions can only be hypothetical.

The inscription of 516 A.D. was carved under the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Āvideya. This prince belonged to the first dynasty of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas whose founder was Prasanna and whose dominion was the middle Narmadā country. This family seems to have been already in existence at the time of Aśoka although it is unlikely that their country ever was directly a part of the Magadha empire. They only recognised the missionary emperor as a powerful neighbour, to whom they were allied by compulsion. They were perhaps the descendants of the first Aryan tribes who came into the Deccan before the fifth century B.C. Their language must have been a Prākrit akin to Mahārāṣṭrī.

The Magadha paramountcy undermined by civil wars broke up rapidly under the blows of the Śaka and Kushān invasions coming from the west and of the Śātavāhana armies from the South. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa chieftains unfortunately situated between those two powers must have lost their independence to one or other of them successively.

The origin of the Śatavāhana dynasty has not yet been definitely ascertained[2] but the most likely theory is that they were native of the Adoni country, therefore Kannaḍa.[3] Taking advantage of the decline of the Maurya empire, they began to extend their boundaries and by the middle of the first century B.C. they had achieved rapid expansion northward and eastward. Their rule lasted for nearly three hundreds years, although for a short period they were deprived of their north-west possessions by the invasions of the Śakas. It is to be noted that the Śakas entered the Deccan, according to an inscription in the Pāṇḍuleṇā caves in Nāsik,[4] to help some Aryan clans described as "Kṣatriyas" to recover their independence lost to the Śatavāhana rulers. It is likely that among those Kṣatriyas were the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

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[2] SUKTHANKAR, V. S. Home of the so-called Andhra Kings, in *ABORI* 1.24 (1920).

[3] RAO, G. V., Tribal Affiliation and the Home of the Satavahanas, in *JIH* 29.1.53.

The Śatavāhanas were *certainly not Aryan*, but represented on the *contrary the reaction of pre-Aryan Deccan against* the pressure of the *Aryan people of the north. Buddhism and Brahmanism flourished side by side under their rule. Their kings were protectors of the* Buddhist dharma and had many monasteries built all over the Sahyādri range, from Nāsik to Karhāḍ. Paṇḍharpūr must have been under the Śatavāhana kings for nearly three centuries, but there is no archaeological evidence of any Buddhist buildings in or near the town, in spite of the opinion of John Wilson.[5] Paṇḍharpūr if it existed at that time was not more than a tiny village.

The period which followed the ruin of the Śatavāhana empire in the middle of the third century A.D. is an obscure period for the historian. Until the beginning of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule, there is no record of what happened in the Deccan. However subsequent history helps us to guess what must have happened. Freed from any powerful overlord, it is probable that the local petty chieftains became independent. Some Ābhīra kings seem to have ruled in the North, but that does not concern the Paṇḍharpūr country. Still if we know little of the political situation in the Deccan during the third and fourth century A.D., the fourth century in India was dominated by the personality of Samudra Gupta.[6] Although his dominion did not extend south of the Narmadā, he launched many successful raids in southern India and it is possible that all local rulers must have recognised him as their overlord. On the other hand, the cultural influence of the dynasty must have been felt strongly in the Deccan. It must be noted that the Guptas were devoted to Viṣṇu and that a statue of Viṣṇu at Udayagiri near Bhīlsā bears a strong likeness with the statue of Paṇḍharpūr.[7]

In course of time, some of the local chieftains became more powerful than their neighbours and began to set up small kingdoms. The fourth century saw the creation of the Ganga kingdom around Tālkhed, the Kadamba around Banavāsī, the Tuluva in the Konkan.[8] The fifth century saw the revival of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In 470 a Rāṣṭrakūṭa family, taking opportunity of the weakening of the Gupta power resulting from the invasions of the Hun armies, became independent. Their dominion was originally the middle Narmadā country. There is little doubt that they were formerly under the Guptas, and they must have been under their cultural as well as their political influence. Their home was not far from the ancient city of Vidiśā which became the forward base of Candragupta II during his operations against the Śakas. Near that city flourished at that time the Brahmanical centre of Udayagiri.[9]

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[4] *BG* 16 (Nâsik), see 'Pâṇḍuleṇâ', Cave No. 3, and p. 553.

[5] WILSON, J., *Memoir on the Cave Temples.*

[6] SMITH, V. A., *Oxford History of India*, p. 148.

[7] PATIL, D. R., *The Monuments of Udayagiri Hill*, p. 34.

[8] SIRCAR, D. C., *The Successors of the Satavahanas*, p. 258.

In 480 A.D. Mānāṅka, the second king of that dynasty extended his dominion eastward up to the Bay of Bengal and southward up to the Bhīmā. In 520 the new kingdom was divided into three provinces and the southern province became the lot of Āvidheya. It is under that prince that the copper plate discovered at Kolhāpur was carved. This copper-plate refers to the donation to a Brahmin called Jayadviṭhṭha of five villages among which was Pāṇḍaraṅgapallī rightly identified with Paṇḍharpūr. The date of the copper-plate is according to Dr. Krisna 516 A.D.[10] But still we must not read in it more than is written and some of the conclusions drawn by B.A. Saletore are doubtful.[11]

The language of the donation is Sanskrit, but of a clumsy style imitating the Gupta inscriptions and it is written in Kannaḍa script. Besides, the copper-plates were discovered in Kolhāpūr. It is therefore probable that, at that time, the official language of that part of the Deccan was Kannaḍa, and it is even possible that the language of the people was also Kannaḍa. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers were certainly not Kannaḍa speaking but came from a country where Mahārāṣṭrī had long been the language. So if a king whose mother tongue was probably the Apabhraṁśa found it necessary to employ Kannaḍa script for his inscription it may have been only to ensure that it would be understood by the people concerned. Sanskrit was the court language of the time, but most probably the inhabitants of Paṇḍharpūr knew only the Kannaḍa script.

We know that the Raṣṭrakūta kingdom was divided by Āvidheya's father and distributed among his three sons. As the copper-plates were inscribed in the sixteenth year of Āvidheya's reign, the country around Paṇḍharpūr must have been included in his dominion. But as the expansion of the Raṣṭrakūtas dates only from 480 A.D., we can infer that they must have conquered the Paṇḍharpūr area at the end of the fifth century A.D. They brought with them the Gupta cultural tradition and used the Gupta style for their inscriptions and for their buildings. We have seen that the Paṇḍharpūr image of Viṭhobā has many points in common with some statues of Viṣṇu of the Udayagiri hill. It is quite possible that the statue of Paṇḍharpūr was carved under the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule by some artist trained in the Gupta tradition.

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[9] RAYCHAUDURI, H., *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 467.

[10] *MAD* (1929), pp. 198 ff.

[11] SALETORE, B.A., The Antiquity of Paṇḍharpūr, in *IHQ* (1935), p. 773.

Paṇḍharpūr in the text of the donation[12] is called a 'palli' and is mentioned together with four other villages. It seems therefore that at that time it was not more than a village and had not attained any prominence over the others. The fact that the five villages lie quite close to one another reveals that the part of the Bhīmā valley was already well populated.

The name of Paṇḍharpūr is mentioned twice in those copper-plates: once as Pāṇḍaraṅgapallī, the name of the village, once in Pāṇḍarādhisena or Pāṇḍarādrisena the name of the scribe. It follows that at that time the town was called Pāṇḍaraṅga or Pāṇḍara. Pāṇḍara is a Kannaḍa proper name used in several inscriptions.[13] The name Pāṇḍarādrisena is interesting: it would mean the lord of the hill Pāṇḍara. Dr. Krishna wrote that[14] "as no hill of that name known, Pāṇḍarādrisena may stand for Pāṇḍarādhisena". Mr. Khare is of the same opinion.[15] But there is another inscription mentioning the hill of Pāṇḍara : the copper-plate[16] dated 757 and mentioned below contains the name Bhāndaragavaṭṭiga': vaṭṭiga represents Kannaḍa biṭṭiga which means "of the hill". This hill Pāṇḍara or Bhāṇḍaraga may have been the hillock on which the Temple of Viṭhobā stands. Although it does not actually look like a hill, formerly, when no houses were standing around it, it must have been a conspicuous landmark in a flat country. In much the same way there are parts in Paris called "Montparnasse" and "Mont Sainte Genevieve" which to-day do not look like mountains and still bear the same name as the "Mont Blanc" the highest peak in Europe.

Several conclusions have been drawn from the name of the Brahmin Jayadviṭhṭha.[17] The question will be discussed in detail in the chapter on Etymology. Our conclusion is that the second part of the name 'viṭhṭha', does not necessarily refer to Viṭhṭhala and so it seems unsafe to infer from that name only that at the time of the inscription God Viṭhṭhala was already worshipped at Paṇḍharpūr. We do not find any reference to Viṭhṭhala in Paṇḍharpūr before 1237 A.D., i.e. at a much later period.

Paṇḍharpūr remained part of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa domain for over one century. Then, in 615, they were defeated by the Kannaḍa king

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[12] *MAD* (1929), pp. 198 ff.

[13] *EC* 11.Jl.30.

[14] *MAD* (1929), p. 198 No. 2.

[15] KHARE, G.H., *Sri Viṭhṭhala āṇi Paṇḍharpūr*, p. 7.

[16] SRIKANTHA SASTRI, S., *Sources of KarṇātakaHistory*, I.49.and *EI* 5.202, *EI* 9.202.

[17] SALETORE, B.A., *History of Tuluva*, p. 773,

Pulakeśin II Cālukya, who conquered the three 'Mahārāṣṭra.'[18] Indra, the grandson of Āvidheya was one of those defeated Rāṣṭakūṭas. The Cālukyas had built their power around Vātāpīpura (Badami), and they soon became so powerful that they claimed all the provinces which were formerly part of the Sātavāhana empire. They occupied all Mahārāṣṭra and the Narmadā once more became the boundary between northern India and the Deccan. It was there that the victorious armies of king Harsha were stopped in 620 A.D., and in spite of several attempts, the king of Kanauj had to give up all hope of an all-Indian empire. Pulakeśin assigned the government of those new provinces to his relatives, and Satara and Paṇḍharpūr came to the lot o f his brother Viṣṇuvardhana who later founded the Cālukya dynasty of Veṅgī. The Cālukyas held sway over that country for a century, and under their protection the *Jaina faith became prominent and spread over Mahārāṣṭra.*

Meanwhile, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, although deprived of their kingdom had been allowed by the Cālukyas to continue as governors of their traditional provinces in Northern Mahārāṣṭra. They took advantage of this position to gradually build up their strength again around Elichpur. When dynastic trouble broke out at the court of the Cālukyas Dantidurga Rāṣṭrakūṭa, with a handful of followers, made a bold attack on the Karnataka armies, and succeeded in routing them. He thereafter reassumed supreme power over the Deccan around 750 A.D., and the Aryan pressure southwards started again, along with a Brahmanical revival which found its best expression in the 'Kailāsa' rock temple at Ellora, built in the reign of Dantidurga's son.

However, Paṇḍharpūr appears to have remained under the Cālukyas at least until 756 A.D. This may be inferred from an inscription of Kīrtivarman II,[19] which mentions Bhāṇḍaraga vaṭṭiga, a village "on the bank of the Bhīmarathī" where he stayed. Bhāṇḍaraga is most probably the Pāṇḍaraga of other inscriptions and vaṭṭiga may stand for Biṭṭiga meaning of the mountain.

It is certain that later Paṇḍharpūr became part of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire and this is attested by the short confirmatory grant engraved in the reign of Amoghavarṣa I on the back of the third of the copper-plates of 516.[20] Amoghavarṣa fixed his capital at Mānyakheṭa (Malkheḍ) not far from the junction of the Bhīmā and the Kṛṣṇā rivers i.e. in the heart of the Karnāṭaka and about one hundred miles south-east of Paṇḍharpūr. Mālkheḍ became a famous cultural centre where many poets gathered,

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[18] SRIKANTHA SASTRI, Sources etc...., I.40 (Aihole Inscription).
[19] *EI* 5.202.
[20] *MAD* (1929), pp. 209, 10.

mostly of the Jaina faith. He himself was the spiritual disciple of the digambara saint Jinasena. As it has often happened in history, the conquerors were assimilated in the civilisation and culture of the conquered, and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas adopted the language of the court of the Cālukyas as well as their literary traditions. Indeed the alternative predominence in the Deccan of the Cālukyas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas must not be looked upon as the result of foreign wars, but rather as the struggle between two ruling families.

Indeed, for outsiders, it was the same people only ruled by successive dynasties. When Dantidurga fought against the Cālukyas, he fought against the 'Karnāṭaka' armies. Then when his successors fought against other kingdoms in Mālwā or Bundelkhaṇḍ, in the eyes of the latter the Rāṣṭrakūṭa armies were also 'Karnāṭaka'.[21] It made no difference for them whether those armies were led by a Cālukya or a Rāṣṭrakūṭa. Another name also i.e. — Vallabha — was used in common for those armies.[22] In an inscription of the prince Narasimha Ganga dated 799 A.D. the Vallabha armies are mentioned as being composed of Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Cālukyas and Haihayas. In the Mahāpurāṇa of Jinasena II,[23] the Rāṣṭrakūṭas are called Karnāṭakas. Jinasena was one of the many Jain writers at the court of Amoghavarṣa II.

Moreover, Kannaḍa was the language spoken at Mālkheḍ both by the Cālukyas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Indeed the author of the famous Kavirājamārga,[24] (one of the earliest known works in Kannaḍa), who was living under the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Amoghavarṣa tells us that Kannaḍa was spoken from the Cauvery river on the south to the Godāvarī river on the north. The Jaino-Kannaḍa literary tradition went on under the successors of Amoghavarṣa. Krisṇā III was the protector of the famous poet Ponna, the author of the Śānti Purāṇa. The epitaph of the last king of the dynasty Indra IV was carved in Kannaḍa at Śrāvaṇa Beḷgoḷa (982 A.D.).[25]

The Rāṣṭrakūṭas held their sway over the Deccan till about 973 A.D., when the Cālukya Tailapa II overthrew them and assumed the imperial power. The change in the ruling dynasty was not of great political significance since Tailapa married the daughter of the last Rāṣṭrakūṭa. The cultural tradition of Mālkheḍ did not suffer from that change, and great poets continued to cultivate the Kannaḍa language under the protection of the kings. Jayasiṁha who was on the imperial seat in 1020 A.D. was the protector of the Kannaḍa poet Chandra Rāja,[26] as well as of the earliest Smārta writer in Kannaḍa Durga-Siṁha.[27]

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[21] Ray, H. C., *Dynastic History of Northern India*, I.700.
[22] Srikantha Sastri, *Sources etc....*, I.60. (Alur Grant of Yuva Narasimha).
[23] *Ibid.*, I.74.
[24] Rice, S. D., *History of Canarese Literature*, p. 8, 25.
[25] Srikantha Sastri, *Sources etc....*, I.119.

Under Someśvara I, son of Jayasiṁha, the Cālukya power reached its peak. For the third time in the history of the Deccan the whole country was united under one central power. Someśvara even conquered Gurjara, Malwā, Chedi. He shifted his capital from Māḷkheḍ to Kalyāṇī which is nearer Paṇḍharpūr. His son Vikramāditya VI was the last great king of the Dynasty. His capital of Kalyāṇī became a famous cultural centre where Sanskrit was specially held in honour.

No inscription or mention of Paṇḍharpūr gives us an indication of the condition of the village during the reign of the Cālukyas. So near was it to the capital of the empire that it must have been closely identified with the fortunes of the ruling power. There is no inscription either where we find mention of Viṭhṭhala either as the name of a God or in the name of a man or of a place. The only mention of Viṭhṭhala is found in a Telugu work, the Divyasūricarita[28] in which a king Viṭhṭhala is said to have been ruling over Tirupati in 1062. Otherwise, the earlier inscriptional mention of Viṭhṭhala is found in a Shimoga inscription of 1216 A.D.[29]

Towards the end of the Vikramāditya's reign the great feudatories began to struggle for their independence. The more powerful of them were the Yādavas, the Hoysaḷas, and the Śilāhāras. Led by the Kalacurī Bijjala they were for a short while successful in establishing a new dynasty on the imperial seat. During this interlude the Vīraśaiva revivalist Basava founded the sect of the Liṅgāyats. But soon after, the Cālukyas ousted the usurper and recovered the imperial seat. Nevertheless the foundations of the empire had been shaken and within a short time a new rebellion achieved success and the dominion was split into two kingdoms under the Hoysaḷas and the Yādavas.

It is in circa 1180 A.D., that the disruption of the Cālukya empire took place and the end of the twelfth century is an important date for the history of Mahārāṣṭra. Hitherto again and again one ruling family or another had been successful in uniting together the various provinces of the Deccan. Since then that unity was never achieved again, Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka being destined to undergo their evolution separately. Until now Kannaḍa had been the dominant language of the country and of the court, but the growth of Marāṭhī language was to change the situation and to widen more and more the gulf between Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka.

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[26] *Ibid.*, I.142.

[27] *Ibid.*, I.146.

[28] SRINIVASARAO, V. N., *Tirupati Sri Venkateśvar Balaji.*

[29] *EC* 7.54 (Shimoga).

With this partition there appeared also two new centres of culture, Devagiri in the Marāṭhī part, and Dwārasamudra in the Kannaḍa part. The Hoysaḷas were the real successors of the Cālukyas. They were of Karnāṭaka origin like the Cālukyas, and came from the hilly country of Mudigere in Mysore.[30] Commencing their career as petty chieftains of a few hill-tribes, they overcame all their neighbours in the hills thus acquiring the name of Maleparol Gandan or Champion over hill chiefs. The eponymous Saḷa must have lived in the tenth century A.D. They were of much service to the Cālukyas in their numerous wars specially in protecting the southern boundary of Karnāṭaka against the Cola armies. In 1182 A.D. Ballāḷa II became independent and built his new capital at Dwārasamudra. There, the Hoysaḷas carried on the tradition of the court of Kalyāṇī in protecting many Kannaḍa writers, chiefly Jain, such as Nemicandra. Bandhuvarma Janna Rudrabhaṭṭa was the first Vaiṣṇava poet in Kannaḍa and lived at the court of Dwārasamudra.[31]

In a parallel manner the Yādavas, a local family of petty rulers had been living for several centuries in Northern Mahārāṣṭa, in the upper Godāvarī districts. Like the Hoysaḷas they had also helped the Cālukyas in their expeditions against Malwā and Chedi, and became important vassals of the latter. Finally Bhillama became independent and built his new capital at Devagiri in 1187 A.D. The mother tongue of the Yādavas was Marāṭhī, and Marāṭhī became the official language of the court, together with Sanskrit. It was a reaction against the predominance of Kannaḍa which up till then had been the official language of the preceding ruling dynasties.

Each of those two powerful kings wanted to get the full inheritance of the Cālukya empire and a trial of strength was inevitable between them. The Yādava king Ballāḷa was a great general and had gained much fame and power by his expeditions in Gurjara and Malwā. He made up his mind to extend his dominion to the south as well and invaded the Hoysaḷa territory. A very costly battle was fought at Lakkuṇḍī in Dharwar in 1192 A.D. where the Hoysaḷas were able to meet successfully the Yādava challenge. The latter retreated into their own territory and the dividing line between the two kingdoms became more or less permanent. From that time onwards, the Yādavas expanded only towards the north, into Gurjara, Malwā and Chedi, and the Hoysaḷas only southward into Gangavaḍī and Tāmiḷnāḍ.

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[30] SALETORE, B. A., *Wild Tribes in Indian History*, 82.

[31] RICE, 51.

It is most probable that the Paṇḍharpūr country at the beginning of the thirteenth century was already a Marāṭhī speaking country. This can be inferred from the data given by the geographical mentions found in the early Mahānubhāva literature,[32] as well as from the location of the earliest Marāṭhī inscriptions,[33] besides, many writers of the time of Jñāneśvara had their birth-place near Paṇḍharpūr which means that Marāṭhī was spoken there for some generations before them.[34] Marāṭhī must have become predominant in that country during the tenth or eleventh century. However, Kannaḍa was still spoken there at the end of the 13th century. At the time of the partition of the Cālukya Kingdom it must have been a bilingual country, and it became also logically enough a battlefield between the two new kingdoms.

It was first under the sceptre of the Hoysaḷas as the inscription of 1237 A.D. found in the Great Temple itself shows us.[35] This inscription is very interesting in connection with the history of the god Viṭhṭhala, for it is the first that mentions the existence of the god at Paṇḍharpūr. According to it, King Vīra Someśvaradeva got hold of the country after fighting against the Yādavas and gave a village in Kaḍur for the benefit of the priest of the temple. The grant is written in Nāgarī script, but the language is in part Sanskrit, and in part Kannaḍa which was the official language of the court of Dwārasamudra. Paṇḍharpūr is called Pāṇḍarage in the Sanskrit part, and Pāṇḍarage and Pāṇḍaraṅge in the Kannaḍa part. Those names are the same as those found in the 516 A.D. inscription and nearly the same as the Bhāṇḍaraṅga of the 757 A.D. inscription. But it is no longer a small village, 'pallī', but it has become a large village i.e. a small town, Mahāgrāma. Still more interesting is the fact that Puṇḍarika Muni, the Puṇḍalīka of the legend, is also mentioned. Unfortunately, we do not know when this holy man arrived in Paṇḍharpūr and from where. The assumption made by Dr. Karmarkar[36] and Prof. Ranade[37] that it was a Kannaḍa ascetic is not supported by any historical evidence, but is not altogether impossible.

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[32] See : BEDEKAR, D. K., *Saṃyukta Mahārasṭra*, 216.7. and KARMARKAR, A. P., *Cultural History of Karnātaka*, 18, 19, 23.

[33] The oldest Marāṭhī inscriptions are found in the following places : Chāñje in Kolābā (1138), Agāśī in Thānā (1150), Chiplūn in Ratnaágiri (1156), Paḷasdev in Poona (1157), Vārlī in Thānā (1161), Sāvaragaon in Osmānābād (1161), Ter in Bīḍ (1161), etc.... See: HARSHE, R. G. *Jñanaderi*, pp. 42, 3.

[34] Thus Vitobā Khecaṛa was born in Barśī, Cokhā in Mangalveḍhā, Gorā in Teraḍhokī, Saṁvatā in Miraj, Nāmdev in Narasingpur.

[35] KHARE, 2, pp. 4, ff.

[36] KARMARKAR, A. P., *Mystic teachings of the Haridāsas of Karṇāṭak*, p. 25.

[37] RANADE, R. D., *Mysticism in Mahārasṭra*, p. 183.

That King Vira Someśvara paid his devotion to Viṭhṭhala is not an isolated fact. Viṭhṭhala had been for a long time a favourite God among them. Several villages in Shimogā and Hassan districts had temples dedicated to Viṭhṭhala, according to the inscriptions of 1216 A.D.,[38] 1217 A.D.,[39] 1227 A.D.[40] and 1230 A.D. In the great temples at Basharaḷu,[41] Govindanahaḷḷi[42] and Bhadrāvatī[43] there are images of Viṭhṭhala among the other 'avatāras' of Viṣṇu. One of the Hoysaḷa kings is stated to have been called after Viṭhṭala, that is, if Biṭṭideva stands for Viṭhṭhaladeva.[44]

Both the kingdoms of the Yādavas and the Hoysaḷas were at the peak of their power in the middle of the thirteenth century. The Yādava Siṅghaṇa took possession of Chedi and ousted from Tripurī the Kakkula king. He destroyed the armies of Arjuna of Malwā and cast Bhoja in prison. On the south, he imposed his rule over the Śilāhāras of Kolhapūr, subdued the Raṭṭas, and the Kadambas of Goa. On his side, the Hoysaḷa Someśvara tried to get hold of some of the Yādava territories but was obliged to retreat. It is most likely that after that the Paṇḍharpūr country became a part of the Yādava dominion. Then the Hoysaḷa led his armies southward and subdued the Colas. He established his local capital at Trichinopoly. But those were the last glorious days of the dynasty for at his death in 1254 his two sons divided the kingdom between them, and their power began to decline.

On the other hand, the Yādavas added new provinces to their dominion and Devagiri became more and more the cultural centre of the Deccan. The famous astronomer Bhāskarācārya was the most prominent personality at this court and his grandson Śārṅgadeva wrote in Sanskrit a classical treatise on Karnāṭaka music.[45] This choice of subject matter indicates that the Kannaḍa tradition was not entirely forgotten at the court of the Marāṭha king. Under king Kṛṣṇa, (1247-1260), the power of the Yādavas reached its zenith, and their political dominion extended over the whole of the Deccan. Concurrently, under their patronage, the Marāthī language acquired the status of a literary language. Already the Śilāhāra king of Thana had used Marāṭhī for his inscriptions:[46] Kṛṣṇa did the same (1248[47] and 1250[48]). Under his successor Mahādeva not only were inscriptions written in Marāṭhī, but literary works as well began to be written in that language, chiefly by Mahānubhāva writers. It was the dawn of Marāṭhi literature.

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[38] *EC* 7, 54 (Shimoga).

[39] *EC* 8.135 (Sorab).

[40] *MAD* (1940), p. 117.

[41] *MAD* (1934), p. 42.

[42] *MAD* (1933), p. 18.

[43] *MAD* (1931), p. 4.

[44] See our Chapter on "*Etymology*".

[45] SRIKANTHA SASTRI, S., *Sources* etc.... I.218.

An inscription in Sanskrit on copper-plates, dated 1249 A.D. does not throw much light on the situation of Paṇḍharpūr at that time.[49] The only significant feature is that Paṇḍharpūr is called Pauṇḍarīka Kṣetre, or the sacred place of Puṇḍalīka. This confirms the impression given by the inscription of 1237 A.D. that Paṇḍharpūr was known as the place where Puṇḍalīka was honoured.

The successor of Mahādeva, Rāmacandra had not the political greatness of his predecessors, but he was fortunate enough to keep as his minister one of the greatest Mahārāṣṭrians of the time, Hemādri. Hemādri had already been minister of Mahādeva and had successfully conducted the domestic affairs of the State while his master was away fighting with his neighbours. His long administration brought peace and prosperity to the kingdom, Arts and Letters began to flourish. It was the architectural period of the Yādavas who, under the guidance of Hemādri, built numerous temples, palaces, etc., all over Mahārāṣṭra. Among other undertakings, the great minister had a new temple for Viṭhṭhala built at Paṇḍharpūr.

The visit of Hemādri to Paṇḍharpūr is recorded in an inscription dated 1273 A.D. Before examining it, we must mention another inscription in Sanskrit, dated 1270 A.D. and unfortunately very damaged, where the words Viṭṭhala and Pāṇḍuraṅga are preserved. If the reading is correct, it would be the first time that the name Pāṇḍuraṅga is mentioned in connection with Viṭhobā in an inscription. Dr. Bhandarkar[50] inferred from that name that as Pāṇḍuraṅga is a name of Śiva, the town must have been called after that God, which means that it was formerly a centre of Śiva worship. This assertion is not in keeping with the earlier inscriptions, for there the town is called Pāṇḍarage or Pāṇḍaraṅge. In our opinion Pāṇḍuraṅga of the present inscription is either an incorrect reading for Pāṇḍaraṅga, or does not represent Paṇḍharpūr at all, but is connected with the name of Viṭhṭhala. Anyhow the inference of Dr. Bhandarkar is not justified, for the names Pāṇḍarage, and other derivations from Pāṇḍara do not suggest a connection with a Śaiva cult.

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[46] *EI* 23.272 and Dikshit, M. G., Chiplun Stone Inscription, in *JUB* 13.60.

[47] *BISMQ* 19.85.

[48] *DMIS* 3.65.

[49] *IA* 14.68, 85.

[50] Bhandarkar, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 88.

The inscription of 1273 A.D. is carved on a slab now worshipped under the name of Cauryāyaśī found in the great Temple of Paṇḍharpūr itself.[51] It records several gifts made to the temple for the upkeep of its various ceremonies. The number and the value of those gifts show that Viṭhṭhala had gained considerable fame by that time. Two gifts are more interesting for us, one made in 1276 A.D. by Paṇḍit 'Hemāḍi', no doubt the same as the famous Hemādri, and another of 1277 made by Rāmacandra himself. The mention of Hemādrī is not unexpected for there are still in the present temple of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr remains of an older building of the so-called Hemāḍpantī style, namely, the door which is called Nāmdev gate. Besides, in the surrounding villages, in Māḷśiras, Nātēputē, Veḷāpūr, Puḷunj, Kandalgaon and Kāsegaon, for instance, many ruins in the Hemāḍpantī style bear out this architectural activity of the Yādavas at that time.[52] This is another evidence of the presence of the Yādavas in Paṇḍharpūr at least some years before 1273 A.D.

The gift of 1277 A.D. made by the Yādava King Rāmacandra is also very significant. We know that Rāmacandra made in 1276 and 1277 several expeditions against the Hoysaḷas and that he succeeded in storming Dwārasamudra. It must have been on the way to or from one of those expeditions that he stopped at Paṇḍharpūr and bestowed on the God munificent gifts. In those inscriptions Paṇḍharpūr is called Phāganīpura, possibly a corruption for Phālgunī-pura or the town where the Phālgunī songs are sung. These were the songs supposed to have been sung by the Gopis to Kṛṣṇa. Paṇḍharpūr was, it seems, then famous for the devotional ceremonies to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But the name Pauṇḍarīka kṣetra was still in use, for we find in the famous 'Caturvarga-cintāmaṇī of Hemādri the mention of Pauṇḍarīka as the place where Pāṇḍuraṅga is worshipped.[53]

From the evidence of the inscriptions and quotations mentioned above we can see that the cult of Viṭhṭhala had towards the end of the thirteenth century spread among the Marāṭhī-speaking people and that its fame had reached Devagiri. Paṇḍharpūr had become a town of pilgrimage. Its fame was not limited to the Marāṭhī-speaking region. Kannaḍa people as well were going to Paṇḍharpūr and Viṭhṭhala did not cease to be one of their favourite gods. We have a striking example of that devotion in the "Abhinavakumāracarita" written by the Kannaḍa poet Cauṇḍarasa. According to R. Narasimhachar,[54] this poet was living in circa 1300 A.D. at Paṇḍharpūr and was a great devotee of Viṭhṭhala. All the 'āśvāsas' of his chapters mention "Paṇḍarirāya Abhaṅga Viṭhṭhala." The frequent occurrence of the name Viṭhṭhala in Karnātaka inscriptions, e.g. at Anuja in Chitaldrug (1265),[55] at Beḷur in Hassan (1277 [56] and 1284[57]) at Kuruva in Shimogā (1286)[58] at Ajjampura in Kaḍur (1297),[59] at Sāgar (1298), is sufficient proof that Karnāṭaka people were familiar with the deity of that name. A statue of Viṭhṭhaleśwara was established at Sulekere in Hassan in 1299 A.D.[60]

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[51] *BG* 20 (Solapūr), p. 422, and Rajwade, V. K., *Granthamāla*, XIII.1.

[52] *BG* 20.275 (footnote No. 2).

[53] Khare, 2, p. 1.

[54] Narasimhachar, R., *Karnātaka Kāvi Charite*, I.403, 4.

However, the great event of the end of the thirteenth century in the history of Paṇḍharpūr was the formation of the Vārkarī Panth and the coming of Jñāneśvara to the town. It is an event of considerable importance, because it definitely links Paṇḍharpūr with the cultural movement of the north. Jñānadeva, as we have already seen had spent most of his youth in the upper-Godāvarī valley, in places like Āpegaon, Nāsik, Paiṭhan, Nevāsa, where the Marāṭhī cultural revolution had taken place. He was brought up in this intellectual atmosphere. When he came to Paṇḍharpūr, his personality soon gathered around him many disciples and within a few years Paṇḍharpūr became a new centre of culture. Hitherto it had been a place of pilgrimage only; now it became a centre of spiritual learning as well. For not only did it attract to itself a stream of devotees who came to learn at the feet of the great saint and his successors, but it became the focus from which devotees and disciples returned to disseminate countrywide the teaching which they had imbibed at Paṇḍharpūr. Thus did Sopānadeva establish himself at Sāsvaḍ, Visobā Khecara at Barśī, Gorā at Teraḍhokī, Saṁvatā at Araṇagaon, Cokhā at Mangalvedha. This spreading of the influence of Paṇḍharpūr was providential, for when the onset of Muslim invasions sealed the doom of Devagiri as a Marāṭhī cultural centre, the tradition was enabled to live on in the countryside, to revive later with great strength.

The thirteenth century had not come to a close when the first blow fell on the Yādava kingdom. In 1294 A.D. Allā-ud-din Khiljī, with a small following of eight thousand horsemen, stormed Devagiri and exacted from Rāmacandra a heavy tribute. It was only a raid, but the Yādava king, deprived of the sage advice of his minister Hemādri, did not understand the warning, and made no attempt to gather his strength to meet

[55] *EC* 11.162, 3 (Dg).
[56] *EC* 5.53 (Dg).
[57] *EC* 4.41 (Ng).
[58] *EC* 7.17 (Hn).
[59] *EC* 5.88 (Tk).
[60] *EC* 8.99 (Sg).

the challenge. So when Malik Kāfur, leading the armies of Allā-ud-din who had by then become emperor, appeared before the walls of Devagiri, the Yādava king was compelled to submit to a shameful treaty, and without fighting gave up his independence to become a vassal of the emperor of Delhi. Shameful as was this tame surrender, still more so was his behaviour in helping the Muslims to subdue the brave but unsupported king Pratāprudra of Warangaḷ. Rāmacandra's treason opened to the Muslims the doors of the Deccan.

Encouraged by his success, Malik carried his victorious armies southwards, and in 1310 he stormed and destroyed Dwārasamudra and put an end to the Hoysaḷa dynasty. Although after the death of his father Rāmacandra, Śankaradeva did try to oppose their conqueror, he succeeded only in losing his capital and his life (1312). Malik completed his fateful expeditions in destroying successively all the remaining kingdoms of South India, the Colas, the Pallavas, the Paṇḍyas and the Ceras.

It is possible that the submission of Rāmacandra saved for a time Paṇḍharpūr and its great temple from destruction. For there is near the samādhī of Cokhā an inscription of. 1311 A.D. which indicates that the building of Hemādri was at that time still standing. In it Paṇḍharpūr was called Pandarīpura. But the days of grace did not last long. The Marāṭha chiefs, led by Harapāldev who had married a daughter of Rāmadev, rebelled and tried to shake off the Muslim yoke. The emperor of Delhi, then Mubārak Shah, took that opportunity to launch a new expedition in the Deccan. The Marāṭha armies were crushed and their territory ravaged. To prevent the recurrence of rebellion, the emperor built from the Vindhyas to Dwārasamudra a line of fortresses and thus secured the Muslim yoke on the Deccan to such an extent that it was to last for nearly three centuries.

What was left standing was destroyed by a new invasion led by the Tughlaqs. The Khiljis had been content to leave the Hindu rulers in possession of their domains after exacting tribute and reducing them to feudatory positions. The aim of the Tughlaqs was occupation and imperial expansion, and it was under their dynasty that the first real occupation of the Deccan by Muslims was accomplished. Alaf Khan, the son of Ghias-ud-din Tughlaq, chose Devagiri as his forward base for his methodical operations. He began by definitively destroying the power of the Rajas of Warangaḷ and putting into prison the valorous Pratāparudra. When he became emperor, under the name of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, he even shifted his capital from Delhi to Deva-

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[61] RAJWADE, V. K., 12.3.

giri and from there ruled over the whole of the Deccan and organised the Muslim government of those countries. Being a pious Muslim, he systematically destroyed every temple and shrine dedicated to Hindu Gods and had all their images smashed. If the great temple of Paṇḍharpūr had been spared by the Muslims in 1218, it was certainly destroyed by that time, and the image of Viṭhobā escaped its fate by its removal in some hiding place. Paṇḍharpūr became a city of ruins and was not to really recover from that destruction until the time of the Peshwas.

Nevertheless the Muslims soon had trouble with their new empire in the Deccan. The geographical features of the Vindhya mountains and of the Narmadā river, effectively marking the division of the northern part of India from the Deccan, made themselves felt. The Muslims of the north became divided from the Muslims of the south. Hasan Shah entrusted by Delhi with the government of the Deccan became independent and created the Bahamani kingdom in 1347 A.D. His capital was Gulbargā, 140 miles east of Paṇḍharpūr. This dynasty ruled over the Deccan during the second half of the fourteenth century and most of the fifteenth century. In 1425 the capital was shifted from Gulbargā to Bidar. The kingdom was divided into four provinces Gulbargā, Daulatābād, Berār and Bidar. Paṇḍharpūr belonged to the Gulbargā province.

Very little is known of Paṇḍharpūr during that period. Although reduced to ruins, like other towns in its vicinity, little by little it must have been rebuilt and even the temple must have been somehow repaired. Cokhāmeḷā was killed in 1338 A.D. at Maṅgaḷveḍhā when a wall fell down on him. Nāmdeva, in spite of the political trouble, carried on the work begun by Jñānadeva, and the small group of devotees gathered around him lived a quiet if somewhat saddened existence. Nāmdeva died in circa 1350, and for the next fifty years there is no mention of Paṇḍharpūr.

The great event in Hindu history during the fourteenth century was the creation of the Vijayānagar empire in 1336 A.D. The sons of Sangama were possibly Kannaḍa although some think that they were Telugu.[62] Their family god was Virūpākṣa and they had a temple built in his honour at Vijayānagar, their capital. But they were also devotees of Viṭhṭhala. As early as 1401 A.D., there was a temple of Viṭhṭhala at Vijayānagar, and as Mr. N. Sastri says, "it must have had its origin in the early days of the Sangama dynasty."[63] Many persons bearing the name of Viṭhṭhala were living under the kings of Vijayānagar. We find one at Katavalli in Shimogā (1347), [64] another in Mysore (1356),[65] at

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[62] SALETORE, B. A., Theories Concerning the Origin of Vijayānagara, in *VSCV*, p. 139.

[63] NILAKANTA SASTRI, K. A., *Further Sources in Vijayānagara History*, 1.109.

[64] *EC* 8.Sb. 375.

[65] *EI* 3.34

Tavansandi (1372),[66] at Koppa (1384)[67] and three others in a copper-plate grant of Hari-Hara II (1385).[68] Besides, we find in the Basava Purāṇa (1369)[69] the mention of the Pāṇḍuraṅga sect.

The fifteenth century was a period of gloom for the Hindus of the Deccan. The inhabitants of Paṇḍharpūr had to suffer from the foreign domination and perhaps more than some other cities because of their close proximity to Bidar which was then the Muslim capital. Besides, three long famines occurred towards the end of the century and the ravages of these were felt far more by the subject population than by their masters. People died by thousands in 1369.

The new smaller building built on the ruins of the Great Hemādri temple was in its turn destroyed by a king of Bidar whose name unfortunately is not mentioned. This must have happened towards the end of the century, and Mahipati, says[70] that the Paṇḍharpūr image was removed to a hiding place. It is quite possible that at that time it was altogether removed from Paṇḍharpūr and kept for a time at Vijayānagar from which Bhānudās brought it back to Paṇḍharpūr in the beginning of the sixteenth century. A mosque was even built on the ruins of the temple. Cāṅgdev went to Bidar to plead for the town and with the help of Viṭhobā under the disguise of a Mahār, he succeeded in having the temple rebuilt by workmen from Bidar and at the expense of the Muslim king.

Towards the middle of the century, Senā who was a barber at the court of the king of Bidar gave up his trade and became a Vārkarī saint. A little later Kanhopātrā, a dancing girl, also renounced her position at the court and entered upon the holy life of a Vārkarī. She retired to Paṇḍharpūr, but the king of Bidar, enthralled by her beauty ordered her to come back to the court. Rather than go back to her former life she killed herself on the spot. It is during one of the famines mentioned above that a Brahmin of Maṅgaḷveḍhā, Dāmājipant who was in charge of the State stores in that city, seeing the distress of his fellowmen incurred the wrath of the king by distributing the stores to the Brahmins in need.[71] The king of Bidar incensed at this act summoned Dāmāji to the court of Bidar to answer this daring act and to undergo a severe punishment. Fortunately for the latter, Viṭhobā intervened and he was saved.

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[66] *EC* 8.SB. 199.
[67] *EC* 8.Th. 147.
[68] *MAD* (1941), pp. 245. 6.
[69] Basava Pūrāṇa, 4.5.
[70] Mahipati, Bhaktalilamṛta, 8.130
[71] *BG* 20.277. (Solapūr).

Viṭhṭhala did not cease to be well-known among the Kannaḍa people during the fifteenth century. In the inscriptions, we find a Brahmin called Viṭhala at Haḷaguru in Śriṅgerī in 1401.[72] Then, between 1403 and 1440 there are more than fifty inscriptions of Viṭhṭhala of the governor of Araga,[73] who was closely connected with the Sangama family. In 1404 there is the mention of a village called Iṭṭhala in Alupa,[74] and in 1406 of a town called Viṭhalapura in Shimoga.[75] In 1408 we find mention of the God Viṭhṭhaleśvar, on the banks of the Tungabhadra.[76] There is mention also of man called after Viṭhṭhala in 1420,[77], 1425,[78] 1429,[79] 1450,[80] etc.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the Bahamani kingdom collapsed and was split into five smaller kingdoms. Thus in 1489 Ahmad Nizam Shah became king of Ahmednagar and was ruling over the country south of the Narmadā upto Poona. The governor of Bijāpūr Yusuf Adil Shah also became independent and ruled over the South-east of Mahārāṣṭra up to the Tungabhadrā river. Thus they returned more or less to the respective boundaries of the Yādavas and Hoysaḷas.

During the whole of the sixteenth century continuous warfare took place between Bijāpūr and Ahmednagar and also between them and their Muslim or Hindu neighbours. With its unfortunate geographical position in the midst of this destructive activity, Paṇḍharpūr and the country around it was utterly ruined.

It is no wonder then that the influence of Paṇḍharpūr seemed to have vanished altogether out of the cultural history of Mahārāṣṭra during that period. The Vārkarīs living in continual fear of persecution or of war could not hold their regular meetings and pilgrimages. Indeed for a time even the image, the true centre of the town had to be spirited away. But the Sampradāya was not dead. In many places holy men went on quietly praying for better days. Possibly also the hardships which the people had to suffer held them fast to religion as their sole and last refuge. In these dark days two bright stars appeared. Janārdanaswāmī, although a governor of the fort of Daulatābād under the Muslim king, was famous as a holy man, who was to become the guru of Ekanāth.

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[72] *EC* 6.Sg. 28.
[73] *EC* 8.Th. 11, 13, 129, 133, etc...
[74] SALETORE, B. A., *History of Tuluva*, p. 152.
[75] *EC* 8.Th. 221.
[76] Ibid., 222.
[77] Ibid., 216.
[78] Ibid., 163.
[79] *MAD* (1941), p. 167.
[80] *EC* 8.Th. 194.

In spite of this unfortunate situation, we have seen that the Vārkarī Saṁpradāya did not perish altogether but that Ekanāth, as recorded in our first chapter, not only saved from destruction the glorious inheritance of the former saints, but initiated a new fervour amongst the Vārkarīs, and the glory of Viṭhṭhala of Paṇḍharpūr continued to be celebrated although in different places. We have seen that all through the preceding centuries Viṭhṭhala was known and worshipped in the Kannaḍa country. The sixteenth century saw a marvellous revival of that devotion. It looks as if for a time Vijayānagar took up from Paṇḍharpūr the privilege to be the centre of the Viṭhṭhala cult. However difficult it may be to prove the actual removal of the statue of Paṇḍharpūr to Vijayānagar, and the more recent studies on that controversial question seem to conclude that such an event never took place,[81] the legend itself is like a symbol of that temporary succession of Vijayānagar to Paṇḍharpūr.

We have seen that there was in Vijayānagar a temple dedicated to Viṭṭhala long before the time of Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāja (1509-1529). But it seems probable that a new temple was built under this king, or at least it is sure that considerable improvements and many new features were added to the older temple. The magnificence of the Viṭhṭhalaswāmī temple in Hampe still bears witness of the devotion of the court of Vijayānagar of that time to Viṭhṭhala, who was also the God of Paṇḍharpūr. The inscriptions tell us of the munificent gifts bestowed on the temple for the upkeep of the various ceremonies.

The Vārkarī Panth attained a new spiritual heritage in the Bhakti movement which came into being in Vijayānagar at that time and was later known under the name of Haridāsī movement. The most prominent figure of this movement, Purandaradāsa was born in Purandara, near Sāswaḍ in 1484 A.D.[82] He was converted to the bhakti movement by Pāṇḍuraṅga himself who manifested himself to him disguised as an old Brahmin. He became a warm devotee of the God of Paṇḍharpūr and chose as 'ankita' the name "Purandara Viṭhṭhala". In the beginning of the sixteenth century he went to Vijayānagar where he was initiated by Vyāsarāya, the founder of the Dāsakutas. During the whole century the bhakti panth of Vijayānagar made many disciples most of whom had Viṭhṭhala as their favourite God. Varada Purandara Viṭhṭhala, Guru Purandara Viṭhṭhala, Abhinava Purandara Viṭhṭhala, Gurumadhvapati Viṭhṭhala, Viyaya Viṭhṭhala, are among the most famous of those disciples. The poetical works of those writers introduced a new trend in Kannaḍa literature, being closely akin to the Vārkarī style.

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[81] KHARE, G. H., Kriṣṇadevaraya of Vijayānagara and the Viṭhṭhala Image of Paṇḍharpūr, in *VSCV*, p. 191. See also : NARAYAN RAO, C., An identification of the Idol of Viṭhṭhala in the Viṭhṭhala Temple at Hampi, in *AIOC* 8.715.

[82] KARMARKAR, *Mystic* etc...., pp. 49 ff.

The popularity attained by the God Viṭhṭhala in those days at the court of Vijayānagar was unprecedented and it is not uncommon to find many individuals named after him. There was a Karnāṭaka Paṇḍit called Puṇḍarīka Viṭhṭhala who was one of the most famous exponents of Hindu classical music.[83] A certain Viṭhṭhala was the minister and general of Sadāśivarāya (1544-1545-1558).[84] Many others called after Viṭhṭhala have been mentioned in inscriptions in Kadur (1515-1529),[85] in Hassan (1519),[86] in Mysore (1521),[87] in Bellary (1534),[88] in Chinglepụt (1540),[89] etc. The temple at Vijayānagar is called in the inscriptions Biṭṭaleśvar (1516), Viṭhṭhaleśa (1535), Viṭhṭhaleśvar (1540-1556). The Empire of Vijayānagar was destroyed in 1565, but the city itself does not appear to have suffered much from this defeat and the Temple of Viṭhṭhala continued to be in use until the city was abandoned, due to some infectious disease.[90] But it has served its purpose, so far as the cult of Viṭhobā was concerned.

In the Paṇḍharpūr country, however, the sixteenth century was an unfortunate period. Again and again it was looted by the various Muslim armies. In spite of that the political conditions slowly took a turn for the better. The feudal system which the Bahamani kings had tried without success to destroy, left more and more power in the hands of the local governors of the province. Many of these local chieftains were Hindus, and as their assistance in the field was frequently sought by the Sultans, a tangled political situation was created. For while on the one hand those Hindu captains enjoyed the favour and patronage of the Muslim Courts which employed them, they had on the other hand to fight against some of their own race and creed, likewise serving at a rival court.

The Ahmadnagar court was the one where this situation was more in evidence. The Sultan did not hesitate to patronise Hindu writers and musicians, like Puṇḍarīka Viṭhṭhala. The language of the court, at first Urdu, adopted more and more Marāṭhī words and constructions to finally from a new language called Dakhani. The Deccan College library possesses more than five hundred manuscripts written in that composite language. The government officials were Brahmins, the bankers were Hindus. One is surprised to see the willingness of those Hindu chieftains or wealthy men to support the fortune of their Muslim masters. Unfortunately the outcome of such a political condition was that, the Marāṭha nobles lost their national consciousness and pride, and adopted more and more the spirit of mercenaries or conquistadores. They fought only for more riches and more power, and if they found better prospects in the camp of their master's enemy, they did not hesitate to transfer their allegiance. It is this tendency to shifting allegiance even more than the Muslim armies, against which Śivājī had to fight, and which eventually was to be the cause of the downfall of the Marāṭhā power.

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[83] HULUGUR KRISNACHARYA, Music under the Vijayānagara Empire, VSCV, p. 371.

[84] *EC* 3.Md. 115.

[85] *EC* 5.Ak. 167.

[86] *EI* 3.149.

[87] *EI* 4.2.

[88] *EC* 9.Bg. 30.

[89] *IMP* 1.402, No. 717.

[90] *AIOC* 8.716.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Paṇḍharpūr territory become more than ever a perpetual cause of war between the sultans of Bijāpur and of Ahmadnagar. Time after time the Nizam Shahi armies invaded the territory and tried to annex it, and as regularly did the Adil Shahi forces drive them out. However, the country did belong most of the time to the Bijāpur Sultanate. This state of affairs continued until a new factor altered the balance of power in the Deccan. In 1599 the Mughal armies invaded the Deccan and stormed Ahmadnagar. The Nizam Shah shifted his capital to Aurangābād, from where their able minister Malik Ambar was able to resist successfully for a time the pressure of the new Muslim invaders. He was helped in that task by a Marāṭha family, the Bhosles headed by Shahājī. They succeeded in strengthening the situation of the Sultanate and even annexed in 1623 the country of Paṇḍharpūr.

This operation led the Sultan of Bijāpur to ask for the help of the Mughals, too happy to be able to interfere with the political struggles in the Deccan. The allies, however, were defeated by the joint effort of Malik Ambar and Shahājī at the battle of Bhatavaḍī in 1624. Nevertheless the following year, owing to the jealousy of Malik Ambar, Shahājī left the service of the Nizam Shah and went over to the Adil Shah. Then in 1627 A.D. he transferred his allegiance again to the Nizam Shah, but did not remain long with him being incensed at the Sultan who killed the whole family of his father-in-law the descendant of the Yādavas of old. In 1630 he offered his support to the Mughals, with whom he stayed for only two years, once more coming back to his former master. His help was indeed badly needed, and he tried his best to oppose the Mughals armies. But in the end he had to yield to their enormous superiority in numbers, and the Nizam Shahi Sultanate ceased to be independent and was annexed by the Mughals in 1636. The Paṇḍharpūr country came back to the Adil Shahi Sultan and Shahājī now offered his services to the latter.

The beginning of the seventeenth century was for Paṇḍharpūr a period of revival in several ways. Politically the wise administration of Malik Ambar gave to the country a peace and a prosperity unknown for a long time. On the other hand the growing power of the Hindu nobles at the court of Bijāpur or Aurāngābad secured for the Hindus a period of greater toleration. The great Temple of Viṭhobā was rebuilt although not with the same magnificence as in the time of Hemādri. Archaeological evidence shows that the actual shrine where the statue of Viṭhobā stands dates from that period, as well as the four pillared room in front of the shrine. The Vārkarī saṁpradāya also got a new impetus under the guidance of the great Tukārām. Although an inhabitant of Dehū near Poona, Tukārām infused great enthusiasm in the pilgrimages of Āṣāḍhaand Kārtika, and Paṇḍharpūr recovered its character as a great centre of pilgrimage and culture.

From 1636 to 1665, Paṇḍharpūr enjoyed an uneventful life under the administration of the Bijāpur Sultanate. Meanwhile, about a hundred and fifty miles to the north-west in the country of the Māwaḷ around Poona, the young Śivājī was building step by step a dominion of his own by taking over the fortresses belonging to Bijāpur. The young hero had first to convince the Marāṭhā nobles of his retinue and neighbourhood to give up their mercenary spirit and to join their forces to his in his national struggle.

Some were willing enough to join him, but others preferred to draw peacefully their revenue out of the Muslim treasury of Bijāpur, rather than to risk their lives and properties for the sake of Swarāj. The Mores of Jāvlī were the first to suffer at the hands of Śivājī and paid with their lives for their mercenary allegiance to Bijāpur. With the conquest of Jāvlī near Mahabaleshwar, the dominion of Śivājī was slowly coming nearer Paṇḍharpūr. The government of Bijāpur was by then so weak that it found itself unable to cope up with this new danger to their power.

At last a Muslim champion was found willing to repress the dangerous rebellion, and in 1659 he started from Bijāpur to perform his task. On his way he had to cross the Paṇḍharpūr country and with the idea of frightening the Hindu supporters of Śivājī he stopped at the holy city and desecrated the Temple, destroying all the images of Hindu gods that he could find. Fortunately the Baḍavas of the temple had learned of the recent fate of Tuljāpur, and they hastened to hide the holy image of Viṭhobā, which thus escaped destruction. After having looted Paṇḍharpūr, Afzal Khan went on his way to meet his fate. He was killed under the walls of Pratāpgaḍ by Śivājī himself.

Meanwhile the Mughal Emperor had embarked on the task of enlarging his dominion over the Deccan. His armies first subdued the Sultanate of Golconda and then turned their forces against Bijāpur. Śivājī saw his chance to establish firmly his power in the territory he had already conquered and joined the Mughal armies on their way to attack Bijāpur. A battle took place near Maṅgalveḍha, in the neighbourhood of Paṇḍharpūr, and the Bijāpur army was cut to pieces. It may be noted that Śivājī's brother Vyankojī was one of the generals in the army of the latter. In 1669 Aurangzeb issued an edict ordering the destruction of all the temples and schools of the infidels (Hindus) and imposing a ban on all their teachings and ceremonies. Paṇḍharpūr was soon to suffer from that new decree.

In 1674, Śivājī was crowned king and his power continued to grow in the following years, and for all practical purposes it overshadowed the Sultanate of Bijāpur. At his death in 1680 he left his successors at the head of a powerful federation of Marāṭhā nobles, supported by the whole nation. At that time Aurangzeb decided to complete the conquest of the Deccan. In 1686 he reached the Paṇḍharpūr country and from there commenced his operations against Bijāpur which surrendered in the following year. He then took Golconda and was free to concentrate all his enormous forces against the last independent state of the Deccan, the Marāṭhas. He pitched his camp at Akluj, between Malsiras and Paṇḍharpūr. From that base he launched his attack on Sambhājī, captured him and, to strike terror in the Marāṭhas put him to death after torturing him. He then stormed their capital and captured the widow of Sambhājī, Yesubāi, and her young son Shāhu. But Rājārām the brother of Sambhājī had made good his escape and was crowned Chatrapati. He settled down at Jinji and from there continued the struggle against the Mughals. Aurangzeb determined to wipe out these obstinate enemies and to seize their whole dominion, pitched his camp at Brahmapuri, a few miles south-west of Paṇḍharpūr from which centre for five years he continued to attack various Marāṭha strongholds, meeting however with little success because though the Marāṭhas yielded after a bitter struggle they recovered the conquered territory when the back of the Mughal army was turned.

The occupation of the country by the Mughal Emperor and his host was like a plague for Paṇḍharpūr. Besides, in his anger against the obstinancy of the Marāṭhas, he carried on his persecution against the Hindus and must have looted every temple in the neighbourhood and forbidden any manifestation or ceremonies of the Hindu faith. The statue of Viṭhobā was once more hidden in a safe place.

Finally, the Emperor irritated at the failure of his generals himself assumed the command of his armies and began to storm one by one the Marāṭha strongholds. He left Brahmapuri in 1699 and took Satara the following year. Thence he made his way towards the north, capturing fortresses after fortresses as he went on, but losing them again to the Marāṭhās as soon as his back was turned. Discouraged and exhausted, he retired to Ahmadnagar where he died in 1706. In twenty years of fighting he had not been able to subdue the Marāṭhas.

Taking advantage of the internecine troubles at the court of Delhi for the succession of Aurangzeb, and strengthened by the arrival of Shāhu, freed from his detention in Delhi, the Marāṭhas united around the Chatrapati, and under the growing power of the Peshwa Bāḷājī Viśvanāth they made a quick recovery from the wounds that twenty years of struggle had made on their territories and armies. In 1719 Bāḷājī obtained the recognition of the Marāṭha Swarāj by the court of Delhi, and among the territories of the new state was included the country of Paṇḍharpūr. It was the first time since 1325 that the town was again under a Hindu ruler.

Paṇḍharpūr during the seventeenth century knew better days than during the preceding centuries; despite the fact that it was under domination, a battle-field as it were for various contending armies, and was afflicted by the persecutions of Afzal Khan and Aurangzeb. A new temple of Viṭhobā was built, and the Vārkarī Saṁpradāya was revived with the memories of Tukārām afresh in the minds of his many disciples like Niḷobā and Bahiṇābāi and contributed to give back to the city on the bank of the Bhīmā its former greatness and fame.

The Marāṭha domination over Paṇḍharpūr was not to remain undisputed. The "*coup d'état*" of Nizam-ul-Mulk who freed himself from the suzerainty of Delhi and founded a new Sultanate in the Deccan, brought in its train new consequences for Paṇḍharpūr. From now onwards the Marāṭhas and the Nizam had to struggle for supremacy in the Deccan throughout the eighteenth century and Paṇḍharpūr lay between the two powers. Indeed the revenues of the country were divided between them and it was a cause of endless bickerings. Karmāḷā, to the north of Paṇḍharpūr belonged to a Marāṭhā noble, Rambhājī Nimbāḷkar, while Paṇḍharpūr was theoretically under the Nizam's Governor of Solapūr. However, in spite of these rivalries, the condition of the people was far better than previously. The prejudices of creed or race were nearly forgotten. There were Marāṭhas in the army of the Nizam and Muslims in that of the Peshwas. The period of persecutions had come to an end.

The Marāṭha power steadily grew year after year under the energetic government of the Peshwas. When in 1749 Shāhu died, his Peshwa Bāḷājī Rao, became the real and effectual head of the Marāṭha

Confederation, and Rām Rājā the Chatrapati had to be satisfied with the more or less honorary title of Rājā of Satara. Several Marāṭhas tried to oppose the rule of the Peshwas, as for instance Rāmājī Śivdev who resisted the latter in his stronghold of Sangola, south of Paṇḍharpūr. But this rebellion did not last.

With the revival of the Marāṭha power, Paṇḍharpūr soon rose from its ruins. The second half of the eighteenth century proved to be the golden age of the holy city. Able to go freely on pilgrimage people flocked there, and gifts of all kinds poured into its various temples, with the spoils collected by the Marāṭha armies in their extensive operations in northern and southern India. New temples were built and endowed and new buildings arose on the bank of the Bhīmarathī. Every one of the great nobles set his heart on the task of beautifying the town. Hoḷkar, Śinde, Pawār, and the Peshwas themselves contributed to this architectural activity. From 1770 to 1800 were built seven of the eleven ghats on the banks of the Bhīmā, among which the more important, were the Mahādwāra, the Haridāsa and the Kumbhār. Several new temples were built during the same period: Gopālkṛṣṇa, Viṣṇupada, Lakhubāi, Padmāvatī, Copāḷā, Belīcā Mahādev, Rāmcandra and Bāblyā Mahādev. The great temple itself, so often destroyed or looted, was enlarged and it covered about the same area as in the time Hemādrī. The gracious sixteen pillared Hall owes its existence to the generosity of the Peshwa.

Literary activity in Paṇḍharpūr kept pace with this architectural revival. Although no writer of that time can be compared with Jñānadeva or Tukārām, a number of good and popular poets gave back to Paṇḍharpūr its fame as a city of learning. Among the more famous we must mention Śrīdharswāmī who published most of his works at Paṇḍharpūr, the Harivijaya in 1702, the Rāmvijaya in 1703, the Pāṇḍavapratāpa in 1712, and entered Samādhi at Paṇḍharpūr in 1730.[91]. Among his many other works is a Pāṇḍuraṅga Mahātmya which contains the traditional account of the origin of the cult of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr. Mahipati was born in 1715 and became the most famous biographer of the Saints of Paṇḍharpūr.[92] He wrote his Pāṇḍuraṅga Mahātmya in 1760 and in the same year a story of the life of Puṇḍalīk. He entered Samādhī in 1790. Moropant, the celebrated translator in Marāṭhī of the great Sanskrit epics lived at the time (1729-1794). Many other minor poets also lived at Paṇḍharpūr : among them special mention must be made of Jyotipant Mahābhāgavat, not for his literary achievements, but for his extraordinary devotion to Viṭhobā which made him build more than a thousand temples in honour of the god all over Mahārāṣṭra.[93] He died in 1788.

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[91] CITRAVA, S. V., *Caritra Kosha*, 2.785.

[92] Ibid., 2.617.

[93] Ibid., 2.416.

Nevertheless, even during that period of great achievements, Paṇḍharpūr did not enjoy an entirely uneventful history. The Peshwas found it difficult to hold the Marāṭha Confederation together, as the various powerful nobles had conquered themselves small kingdoms and were inclined to follow separatist tendencies. Raghunāthrāo who was in command of the Marāṭha armies undertook extensive expeditions in Northern India and even reached the Indus and conquered the Panjab. After the disaster of Panipat in 1761, a civil war broke out between the Marāṭha commandants and the power of the confederation was dangerously weakned. This unfortunate situation was still worsened by the death of the Peshwa Mādhavrāo in 1772, and the murder of his successor Nārāyaṇrāo in 1773 at the instigation of Raghunāthrāo who wanted the Peshwaship for himself. Open warfare broke out between the latter and several Marāṭha princes. While Raghunāthrāo was coming back from an expedition in Karnāṭaka, those princes gathered an army under the command of Trimbakrāo Peṭhe and of Haripant Phaḍke, which crossed the Bhīmā river at Paṇḍharpūr and met Raghunāthrāo's forces in a bloody battle at Kasegāon. Raghunāthrāo won the day and killed Trimbakrāo. He then took hold of Paṇḍharpūr, and filled his empty treasury with the wealth accumulated in its temples.

At that time Paṇḍharpūr belonged to the family of the Paṭwardhans who had acquired fame and wealth under the Peshwa Bāḷājīrāo and had obtained the governorship of Miraj and the neighbouring country. In 1774 Mādhavrāo had renewed this grant and assigned to them the task of watching the activities of the Rājā of Kolhāpūr and the Nizam of Hyderabad, who in 1786 was in possession of Solāpūr. The Paṭwardhans were wise governors and many improvements and additions were made to the holy city under their regime.

The opponents of Raghunāthrāo obtained an unexpected advantage with the birth of Nārāyaṇrāo's posthumous son who thus became the legitimate heir to the Peshwaship. Many Marāṭha noblemen who had supported Raghunāthrāo till then, left him to join the party of the legitimists. In despair, Raghunāthrāo called for help from the English who were only too glad to have an excuse to interfere in the political struggle. Raghunāthrāo and his English supporters were defeated at Taḷegāon in 1779. However, a new and difficult campaign ended in a compromise at Sālbāī in 1782. On the other hand, the Nizam suffered a crushing defeat at Kharḍā in 1695 and the whole district of Solāpūr became a Marāṭha province.

For more than twenty-five years, Paṇḍharpūr led a peaceful existence. Nānā Phaḍṇis and Mahādjī Śinde ruling during the minority of the young Savāī Mādhavrāo Peshwa were successful in keeping together the various Marāṭha nobles and opposing sternly the English attempt at interfering in their affairs.

Unfortunately, within five years the Marāṭha confederation lost its last strong supporters : Mahādjī Śinde died in 1794, the young Peshwa in 1795 and Nānā Phaḍṇīs in 1800. The confederation soon lost its cohesion and each separate Marāṭha kingdom fell an easy prey to the British policy. The new Peshwa Bājīrāo had to fly to Bassein where he signed an ignominious treaty which practically put an end to Marāṭha independence. Paṇḍharpūr owed to this treaty its first sight of English troops within its wall. In 1803 General Wellesley passed through Paṇḍharpūr enroute to Poona where he restored Bājīrāo to his Peshwaship.

Under the protection of the English, the Peshwa enjoyed a quiet peace which he had never known before. Freed from the worries of his State, he spent his time in pilgrimages and unfortunately indulged in orgies also. Pursuing his old enmity he tried to add to his revenues by annexing some of the territories which belonged to his feudatories. One of the most powerful were the Paṭwardhans, and to stop the Peshwa's encroachments they asked for the arbitration of the English and a treaty was signed at Paṇḍharpūr in 1812, by which the rights of the Jāgirdārs were safeguarded and protected by the English.

In 1815 a dark plot was organised near the very walls of the great temple. A representative of the Gaikwad of Baroda had come to Poona to settle some financial difficulties between his master and the Peshwa. The latter invited him to accompany him in his pilgrimages. They went together to Nāsik, then as the Kārtikī Ekādaśī was near, they hurried to Paṇḍharpūr where they fulfilled their devotions. Before leaving the holy city, the Peshwa invited the representative to come to the Temple and get a last darśan of Viṭhobā. As the minister of the Gaikwad was going out of the Temple some stooges in the pay of Trimbakjī Dengle, a friend of the Peshwa, killed the hapless Brahmin. The murder of a Brahmin in the holy city caused much excitement and the English who had pledged themselves for the security of the representative asked the Peshwa to deliver the culprits to them. After many delays the Peshwa was obliged to obey, but Trimbakjī made good his escape from the English custody and rejoined the Peshwa.

The Peshwa having made up his mind not to surrender him again and being humiliated by a new treaty signed at Poona which tightened the grip of the English on his State administration, gathered an army and broke into open resistance. In 1817 he reached Paṇḍharpūr which he left at once, leaving behind him Bāpū Gokhale to intercept the English troops which were tracking him. A battle took place near the town, without a decisive result. A few months after, the Peshwa was again in the country of Paṇḍharpūr; a bitter struggle took place at Aṣṭā, and Bāpū Gokhale was killed and the forces of the Peshwa cut to pieces. Soon after Solāpūr was taken by the English, and finally Bājīrāo surrendered to them, thus bringing to a close the Marāṭha renaissance which had come into being in 1644 A.D. with Śivājī.

From 1818 to 1947, Paṇḍharpūr remained peacefully under the English rule. The town steadily developed and new buildings were added to those built in the time of the Peshwas. A small railway line was built, connecting it with the Bombay-Madras line on one side, and the Poona-Miraj line on the other side, thus making it easier for the pilgrim to reach the holy city at the time of the great festivals. Each year a huge crowd gathered in Paṇḍharpūr. In 1873, during one of the great pilgrimages the image of Viṭhobā was broken accidentally or intentionally by some Gosāvīs, and the ceremonies had to be suspended while the necessary repairs were made by the baḍvās.

Upto 1947 A.D., entry into the temple of Vīṭhobā had been refused to the so-called untouchables. With the advent of an independent Indian Government however, a reform was introduced and enforced, whereby temple entry was thrown open to all Hindus including the Harijans. The dream of Tūkārām that within the precincts of the holy city there should be no distinction of caste was fulfilled and to-day the Mahārs instead of stopping short at the entrance of the temple and having to satisfy themselves with worshipping only the 'samādhī' of Cokhā, can enter within and see with their own eyes the god he had celebrated :

"The worshippers of the Temple beat me for no fault of mine. They asked me how it was that I came by the garland on the bosom of Viṭhobā. They abused me and said that I had polluted God. I am verily a dog at Thy door, says Cokhā, send me not away."

We have seen how Paṇḍharpūr, from a tiny village became in the course of time the city of to-day. Unfortunately frequent destruction in the course of its history has deprived us of the archæological evidence of its development. The city as it stands now dates practically from the time of the Peshwas, like so many other cities in Mahārāṣṭra. It is a surprise for the archæologist visiting any of those cities, (Nāsik for instance, already famous in the Buddhist times) to find only relatively recent construction and no ancient remains."[94]

While coming from Solāpūr, and crossing the vast bed of the Bhīmā river one gets the best view of the town. The river, called Candrabhāgā at Paṇḍharpūr on account of its crescent moon-like shape, takes a slow turn towards the south-east. The city lies on the west bank. A long causeway spans the river north of the town, but every year during the rainy season the water flows over it, stopping for a few days the traffic between Paṇḍharpūr and Solāpūr. For the rest of the year the river shrinks to a small stream meandering slowly through a large expanse of white sand.

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[94] This description follows the account given in BG 20. : the details however have been verified on the spot.

Along the river bank eleven ghāṭs climb up to the town. They of those at Hardwar with their rushing torrents of the waters of the have not the magnificence of those at Banaras, nor the wild appearance Ganges. They are more like those at Nāsīk, with long low steps seldom reaching the water. The oldest was built in 1770 and the newest in 1820. Seven of them were built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the Marāṭha power was at its peak. Many of the temples in the town, like most of those at Nāsik, were built during the same period.

The more important of the ghāṭs are the Mahādwār ghāṭ, the Uddhava ghāṭ, and the Haridās ghāṭ, which were built more or less at the same time. The MAHADWAR GHAT, or ghāṭ of the great door is built at the end of the street which leads to the great Temple (PL. 2 NO. 50). The sides of its long and broad steps are generally lined up with beggars and hawkers, for the pilgrims coming from the Temple of Viṭhobā on their way to the river and to the temple of Puṇḍalīk usually use that ghāṭ. The UDDHAVA GHAT owes its importance to the 'devapradakṣiṇā' (PL. 2 NO. 51). The pilgrim must enter the river down those steps. The southernmost GHAT, in fact outside the city limits, is reserved for the outcastes : it is from those ruined steps that in the evening one can get one of the best views of Paṇḍharpūr and its river.

The many temples of Paṇḍharpūr may be divided into three groups, those lying on the bank of the Bhīmā, those lying on the way of the Pradakṣiṇā, and those of the Nagarpradakṣiṇā. The GREAT TEMPLE of Viṭhobā will be described in the next chapter. The more important temple on the river bed is that of PUNDALIK. (PL. 2. NO. 3) Lying in the middle of the river bed, it becomes surrounded by water during the monsoon and can be reached only by boat. The temple is of a very simple construction and has two parts, a shrine and a sabhā-maṇḍapa. The shrine is surmounted by a simple spire and is an eight-sided room, nine feet high, housing a stone liṅga set in a śāḷuṅkā. A hollow brass bust of Puṇḍalīk covers the top of the liṅga. The present temple was built by one Haḷekar in 1750 A.D. and was restored to its present form in 1850 by a mason of Poona. According to a tradition this temple was built on the same place of the temple built by Cāṅgdev, the famous Yogi converted by Jñānadeva.

Puṇḍalīka Samādhi at Paṇḍharpūr (1750 A.D.)

Although often called Puṇḍalīk-Samādhī, it is not certain whether it is located on the actual place of 'Samādhī' of Puṇḍalīk. As however it is the custom to build a liṅga on the place of a 'samādhī', the liṅga in the Puṇḍalīk temple does not necessarily indicate that it was a place of Śiva worship, as has been inferred by Dr. Bhandarkar. The fact that the statue of Viṭhobā is said to have on its head a Śivaliṅga is still too controversial to support the thesis which sees the Viṭhobā cult as a Harihara cult. The service of the temple is performed by Mahādev Koḷīs, who are also in charge of the boats in which pilgrims and onlookers go down the river to the temple of Viṣṇupada.

Near the temple of Puṇḍalīk and also in the bed of the river there are several other small shrines and samādhīs, of more recent date. Along the bank of the Bhīmā, between the Kṛṣṇājī ghāṭ and the southernmost ghāṭ, there are several temples and palaces. On the south of the Uddhava ghāṭ, there is a small Śaiva temple called BABLYA MAHADEV. Inside the shrine is the liṅga in its śāḷuṅkā. Round the latter is a circular ridge of mortar the inside of which can be filled with water so as to cover the liṅga. The chief rite is the abhiṣeka always performed by a Koḷī. All the offerings also go to the Koḷīs. This temple was built in 1772 by a brahmin.

Two imposing structures are built on either side of the Mahādwār ghāṭ. On the north side is the palace of the Hoḷkar (PL 2 NO. 26) and on the south that of the Śinde, (PL. 2. NO. 25). Inside the walls of these palaces, but open to the public by a door opening on the Mahādwār ghāṭ street. are two temples facing each other, the Rāmcandra temple and the Murlidhar temple.

The RAMCANDRA temple was built by the celebrated princess Ahalyabāi Hoḷkar (1735-1785) who erected many temples all over India. The temple consists of two sabhāmaṇḍapas and a garbhagṛha. The statue of Rāma which is worshipped in the shrine is a plain white marble image, standing between the images of Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. The great festival of the temple is Rāmnavamī when during nine days some Kathekarīs discourse for one or two hours a day on Purāṇic legends, mingled with instrumental music and singing. The Holkar family pays for all the expenses of the temple and every day 25 brahmins are fed in its precincts (according to the Bombay Gazetteer), (PL. 2 NO. 9.).

On the other side of the street lies the MURALIDHARA Temple built in 1849 by Bayjābāī Śinde within the precincts of her palace. The temple built in middle of a cloister consists of garbhagṛha and a sabhāmaṇḍapa. The description of the image of the god as it appears in the Bombay Gazetteer is hardly appropriate to Murlīdhar, but rather to an ordinary Viṣṇu image. All the expenses of the temple are paid by the Śinde family and every day twelve Brahmins are fed here. During the main festival at Dasarā and at Gokulāṣṭamī, a Purāṇic is appointed to read the epics and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, (PL. 2. NO. 8).

Near the Candrabhāgā ghāṭ there is a small temple dedicated to the goddess of the river, built in 1857 by G. B. Chopadkar. It consits of a garbhagṛha and a porch. The image of Gaṅgā is that of a squatting woman in black stone. Not far from this temple there is a Gaṇapati temple inside a private property. This temple built in 1800 is a family temple. During the monsoon some singers read the epics there.

At the top of the Datta ghāṭ there is a temple dedicated to DATTA, consisting of a great quadrangle surrounded by a cloister which is used as a dormitory during the great pilgrimages. The image of Datta carved out of a single stone was made in Paṇḍharpūr in 1808 A.D. It is one of the finest in the town. (PL. 2. NO. 7.) The chief festival is Dattajayantī on the full moon day of Mārgaśīrṣa. Not far from that temple there is a small Mārutī shrine called PANCAMUKHI MARUTI. The image is carved out on a stone slab and possesses five heads and two arms, and stands with one foot on the prostate body of the giant Jambumālin, the son of Rāvaṇa. The ceremonies in this temple are performed by Bairāgis, (PL. 2. NO. 12.).

On the south of the above mentioned temple there is a small shrine dedicated to BELICA MAHADEV built in 1787 by Marāṭha noble Jānājī Bājī Ghāṭge. It consists of a garbhagṛha and a maṇḍapa. The shrine contains a liṅga of white quartz set in the middle of two concentric śāluṅkas. The main abhiṣeka is performed on the Mahāśivarātrī night, (PL. 2. NO. 13.).

Most of the temples built on the bank of the Bhīmā are dedicated to Śiva. The second group of temples are built along the devapradakṣiṇa road, which makes a complete circle round the temple of Viṭhobā. Among the more important is the temple of JNANESVARA which consists only of a big hall, part of which is separated from the main part by a partition and forms the shrine. A bust of Jñāneśvara is placed under a wooden canopy. It is in that temple that the Pālkhī of Jñāneśvara is kept during the Great Pilgrimage. The big hall is used for bhajans and kirtans, (PL. 2. NO. 5.).

The NAMDEV temple near the Kāsār ghāṭ is of the same kind, but bigger and more elaborate. It is essentially a sabhāmaṇḍapa intended to accommodate the huge crowds of devotees for the Bhajans. A small shrine on one side of the hall contains a statue of Nāmdev, (PL. 2. No. 4).

The temple called TAKPITHYA VITHOBA which stands a hundred yards from the Great Temple has an interesting origin. There was at the beginning of the seventeenth century an old widow who was a great devotee of Viṭhobā. Every day she used to go to the temple and present the god with offering of food consisting of buttermilk (tāk) and fried millet flour (pīṭh). When the crowd in the temple was too huge for her to be able to present her offerings, she used to fast until better opportunity arose and she could perform her duty. One day in 1618, she could not go near the god, and for a fortnight she could not make her offerings. So faithful to her vow, she remained fasting for that time. Viṭhobā was so happy to see such devotion that he manifested himself to her in a dream and asked her to make her offering there and then. When she woke up, an image of Viṭhobā was standing near her. This statue is a rough black stone image, badly carved, and looking very old. It is possible that this image was rediscovered in 1618 by the old lady after a dream, giving rise to the legend and the name of svayaṁbhu, (PL. 2. NO. 2).

The origin of the temple of CHOPALA is also attributed to a dream. This temple was built in 1770 by Nārāyaṇ Nākhre of Indāpūr. The latter had given to a Baḍvā his offerings to present them to the god, but the latter could not reach the statue on account of the crowd. Fortunately Viṭhobā appeared to Nārāyaṇ in a dream and told him to build a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu Pañcāyatan and to make his offering to him. The temple consists of a Sabhāmaṇḍapa, a Garbhagṛha and a backyard. In the middle of the maṇḍapa there is a round slab called raṅgasilā on which pilgrims sing and dance. The shrine contains a black stone image of Veṇugopāla flanked by two gopīs, (PL. 2. NO. 18).

One of the oldest temples of Paṇḍharpūr, situated two hundred yards east of the Great Temple is the MALLIKARJUNA temple. Although it it a Śaiva temple, the pilgrims are very keen on visiting it during the great pilgrimages. It is impossible to say whether it is older than the present temple of Viṭhobā. It consists of a sabhāmaṇḍapa and a garbhagṛha. The maṇḍapa possesses a raṅgasilā in the middle of its paving. The shrine contains a dark stone liṅga surrounded by a śāluṅkā. The priests are liṅgāyats and the rites are performed twice a day. Between the ceremonies, the pilgrims are to be found crowding into the temple to get a 'darśan' of the god. All the offerings go to the Koḷīs. The main festival is on Mahāśivarātrī, (PL. 2. NO. 14).

The AMRTESVAR temple is almost as popular as the Mallikārjuna. It is built between the Hoḷkar Palace and street going to the Kumbhār ghaṭ. It consists of a garbhagṛha and sabhāmaṇḍapa. The shrine is very old and seems of the same age as the Kālibhairava shrine. It was repaired in 1780 A.D. and the Maṇḍapa added in 1810 donated by a gosāvī who also offered the Ratha for the procession. In the maṇḍapa as in the Mallikārjuna there is a nāga stone. The shrine contains a flat topped liṅga surrounded by a śāluṅkā. There is *bhajan every night*, and kirtan on Mahāśivarātrī night, after which a wooden representation of the god, covered with a brass mask shaped like a human face, is carried in procession. Among the officials for the procession are musicians, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a bricklayer, a wood-cutter, Vadars to drag the car, a Haridās for preaching and singing, a Viṭhṭhaladāsa who is a Jain, and a mace bearer. The yearly income and the food offerings to the god are taken by the Koḷīs, (PL. 2. NO. 15).

There is between the Candrabhāgā ghāṭ and the Datta ghāṭ a modern structure built in 1870 by the Komtis of Paṇḍharpūr. The liṅga worshipped in the shrine is called BATTESVAR. All the food offerings are taken by the Koḷīs; to them also goes the small income of the temple called BERI MAHADEV, after the name of its builder Kṣetrapāl Berī. On the devapradakṣiṇā road lies another temple on the south-west of the town called KALA MARUTI, an old ruined structure containing an image of Mārutī of black stone covered with red paint, (PL. 2. NO. 10).

The temple of TRIMBAKESVAR lies to the north of the Great Temple, not far from it, lost in the midst of private houses. It consists of a garbhagṛha and of a Maṇḍapa. The shrines contains a liṅga of black stone surrounded by a śāluṅkā. The great festival is on Mahāśivarātri night. A brass mask shaped like a human face and overshadowed by nāgas is put on top of the liṅga. This temple is said to be six hundred years old. The Bombay Gazetteer mentions the following legend concerning its origin : "The spot where the temple stands is said to be the scene of a fight between Viṣṇu and a demon. The demon defeated Viṣṇu, cutting off his arms, and Viṣṇu escaped only through the help of Mahādev who smote the demon with his kuṇḍala." This legend gives us another example of the connection between Viṣṇu and Śiva in many a feature of the town, (PL. 2. NO. 16).

Fifty yards east of the Great Temple there is a group of small Śaiva temples. They are built on the site of a sacred tank which was originally surrounded by temples. This tank has been filled up by one of the Bijāpūr Kings, and the temples round it destroyed but the images of the destroyed temples were saved and subsequently were placed in new temples built from the stones of the tank which was called Bhairava tīrtha. The image of Bhairava is kept in a temple called BHAIRAVA built in 1780 which contains also a statue of his wife Jogeśvari, a liṅga, and a Navagraha slab. The great festival is the Bhairavāṣṭamī in Caitra. The image of Gaṇapati is kept in a niche not far from the black stone of Cokhāmeḷā. The image of Banaśankarī is kept in the temple of SAKAMBHARI repaired in 1775. These temples are ministered by the baḍavas of the Great Temple, (PL. 2. NO. 17).

Near the Mahādwār ghaṭ the temple of the local Mārutī called TAMBDA MARUTI is located. This temple is said to have been built by Rāmdās and repaired in 1730 and in 1855. It is to this temple that the future bride and bridegroom come to perform their devotions before going to the house of the bride. The main festival is on Caitra Paurṇimā when a Haridās sings the legends connected with the birth of the god. The image is coated with redlead mixed with oil, (PL. 2. NO. 11).

Once in a lifetime at least, the pilgrim must do the Nagar-pradakṣiṇā or the tour round the town. This pradakṣiṇā consists of many "stations" and covers nearly fifteen miles. The start is from the Puṇḍalīk temple whence a boat will take the pilgrim down the stream to the Viṣṇupada temple.

The VISNUPADA temple consists of a maṇḍapa built on a platform on a small island in the middle of the river. During the monsoon, the temple itself is completely covered by the flood. In the middle of the temple a square space is fenced off by a masonry ridge enclosing three rocks with the footprints of Kṛṣṇa and his cow. Those footprints are objects of worship and it is in this temple that the śrāddha ceremonies are performed. The month of Mārgaśīrṣa is specially celebrated at Viṣṇupada; on the fifth day of this month the pādukā of Viṭhobā are carried in procession to that temple, and Viṭhobā is suposed to stay there with the gopīs. On the last day of the month the car of Viṭhobā is dragged to this temple, and in the evening the pādukās are brought back to the temple in a torch-light procession.

The next stage is the NARADA temple within the precincts of the Gopālpūr temple. It contains an image of Nārada seated in Padmāsana. Nor far from it and also within the walls of the Gopālpūra temple is the temple dedicated to Rukmiṇī's father BHIMAKRAJ MAHADEV, which contains a liṅga covered with a brass mask figuring Bhīmakrāj. The GOPALKRSNA temple lies in the middle of a quadrangle surrounded by cloisters which are used by pilgrims during the great pilgrimage. It consists of a garbhagṛha and a maṇḍapa. The date of the building is written on the raṅgśilā in the centre of the maṇḍapa; it is 1744 A.D. The shrine contains an image of Gopālkṛṣṇa with the usual features of that god. The carvings of the temple seem to have been damaged by Muslim image-breakers. The main feast is on Gokuḷāṣṭamī, but many pilgrims go to the temple on Āṣāḍhī and Kārtīkī Paurṇimā after the "kālā" ceremonies. The services are performed by Gurava priests, Marāṭha by caste.

The names of two devotees of Viṭhobā are connected with that temple, Kānhopātrā and Janābāī. Within the precincts of the temple there is an underground cell where Janābāī is said to have dwelt and which contains a black-stone image of Viṭhobā.

The next stage is the PADMAVATI temple, to the west of the town. In 1778 Yeśwantrāo Pawār of Dhār built a tank in the middle of which he erected a temple dedicated to Padmāvatī. It consists of a garbhagṛha and an anteroom. The shrine contains a rough black stone carved as *a huge head. The ceremonies are performed by the baḍavās who collect the offerings. The great festivals are for nine days of the Navarātra in the month of Āśvina and the Paurṇimā of the same month, when bhajans are sung on the platform in front of the temple.*

The pilgrim must go afterwards to the temple of VYASA which stands on the north of the town. It consists of a garbhgṛha and a maṇḍapa surrounded by a wall in which several niches are set. The shrine contains an image of Vyāsa writing. The baḍvās of the great temples perform the ceremonies on Kārtikī Paurṇimā when the Pañcāmṛta bath is given to the statue. During the first days of Jyeṣṭha some brahmins from the Great Temple come to sing the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

The temple of AMBABAI lies three hundreds yards east of the last temple, and on the bank of the Bhīmā. It consists of an ante-room and a garbhagṛha. The shrine contains the image of Ambābāi as Mahiṣāsuramardinī with eight arms. In front of the temple there is a stone altar used for kindling the sacred fire. The ceremonies, formerly performed by the Koḷīs, are now carried out by the baḍavās. Many Brahmin and Marāṭha families have Ambābāi as family goddess. They gather in front of the temple in Navarātra of Āśvina and perform special ceremonies with the participation of the Aradhnis holding lighted torches.

Another temple the ceremonies of which are like those at the Ambābāi temple is the LAKHUBAI temple, which is also in the last stage of the pradakṣiṇā. It stands on the bank of the Bhīmā, to the south of the last mentioned temple. It consists of a garbhagṛha and of an anteroom. It was built in 1780 on the site of an old Hemāḍpantī temple. The shrine contains a black stone image of the goddess in the padmāsana posture and with four arms. In front of the statue there is a black stone called Tāndaḷā coated with redlead and which represented the goddess before the image was carved. The temple is ministered by the baḍvās of the Great Temple. A legend connects this temple with the Great Temple. Lakhubāi is Lakṣmī who after a quarrel with Viśṇu came to Diṇḍīravana on the bank of a river. Viṣṇu found her here and made his peace with her. Later on Puṇḍalīk asked Viṭhobā to come back to this place with his wife. It is from this temple that the pilgrims going to Tuljāpūr start their journey.

Paṇḍharpūr, as all other centres of pilgrimage has many temples dedicated to various deities. A good number of these temples are dedicated to Śiva under one form or the other. Another group, dedicated to

Viṣṇu is connected with the Great Temple. There are also the usual temples dedicated to the grāmadevatās of the village. The Koḷī community performs the ceremonies and takes the offerings in many temples. The baḍavās are in in charge of the others.

CHAPTER III

VITHOBA'S TEMPLE

A centre of pilgrimage, Paṇḍharpūr has grown around the Great Temple of Viṭhobā which is its geographical centre as well as its "raison d'être". It is clear enough from what we have seen in the last chapter that the history of the town is indeed the history of the temple itself. Viṭhobā is often called the "Lord of Paṇḍharī" and this expression well expresses that Paṇḍharpūr is his own personal town. There are, truly enough, many other temples within the precincts of the town, but none has the fame and most probably the antiquity of the temple of Viṭhobā. They were built by wealthy pilgrims attracted by the holiness of those banks of the Bhīmarathī. All the other towns of pilgrimage in India have also such an abundance of temples for the sanctity of a place attracts devotees of other cults as well.

The temple[1] is built on the top of a small hillock which has become hardly recognisable as such, on account of the many buildings which cover it : but the stiffness of the small lanes which meander between rows of the houses and the temple still reminds the weary pilgrim that the temple is at the top of a mound. The slope is naturally more apparent when one comes from the river bank. The foot of that hillock is surrounded by a street which forms a more or less regular circle with the temple as its centre. This street is called the Pradakṣiṇā road. From the four points of the compass small lanes start from that road and lead to the temple. It is generally possible from the four starting points of those lanes to see the spire of the great temple and so they are held in great reverence by the pilgrim who must, make a complete turn round himself to show his reverence when he happens to cross them.

The temple is not remarkable by any magnificent appearance (PL. 3.). It is closely surrounded by neighbouring houses from which only very narrow lanes isolate it. Indeed the walls of the temple are visible only when one has reached their foot. What is seen of it from outside is a long high wall with several narrow doors. Only the docr on the east is a little more elaborately built. There is nothing in that temple like the magnificence of the temples in Hoysaḷa or Vijayānagara style. As a matter of fact, the Viṭhṭhalaswāmī temple in Vijayānagar is much

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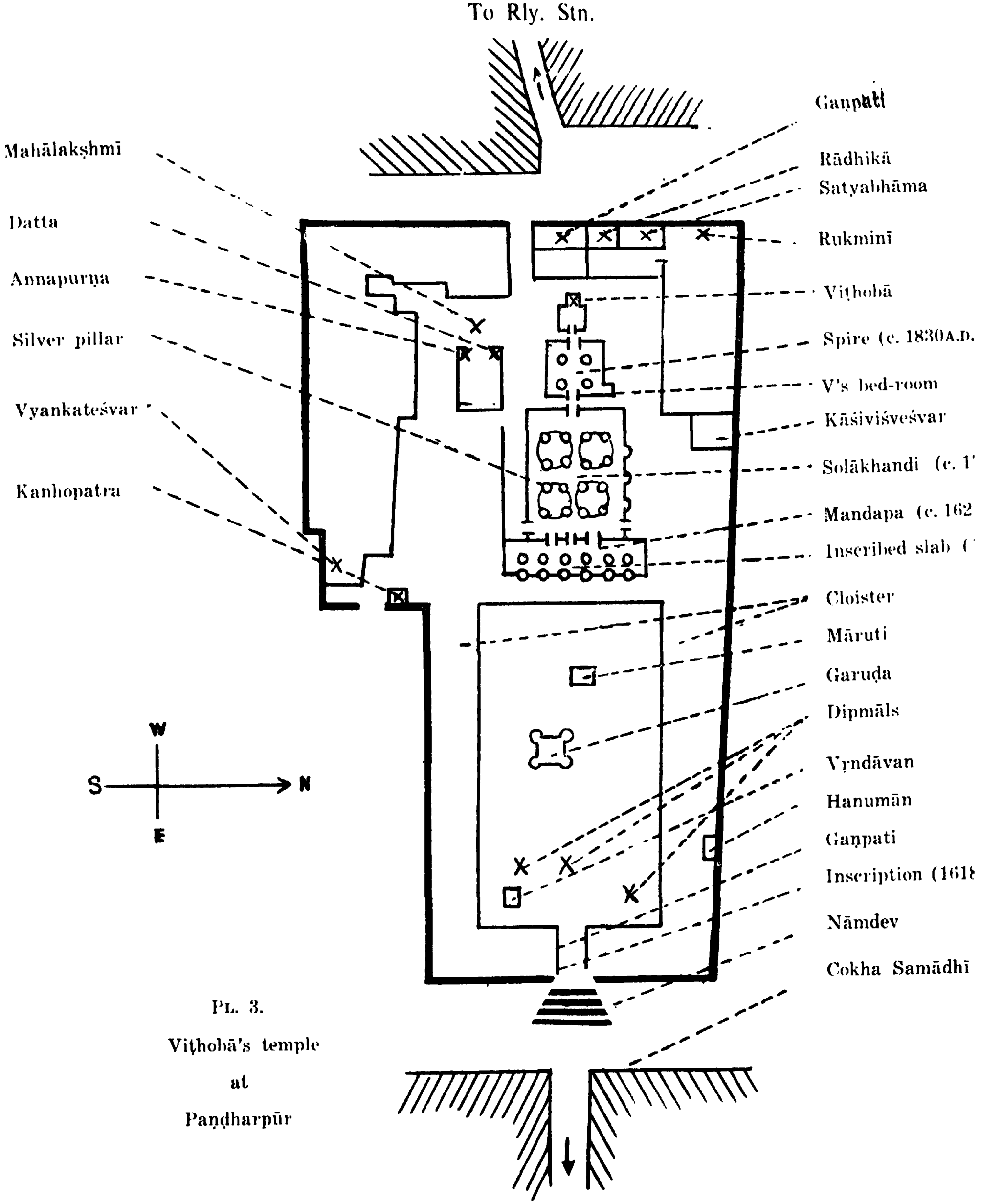
[1] This description follows the account given in *BG* 20 (Solapûr), although all details have been checked "in situ".


To Rly. Stn.
Mahālakshmī
Datta
Annapurṇa
Silver pillar
Vyankateśvar
Kanhopatra
Gaṇpati
Rādhikā
Satyabhāma
Rukminī
Viṭhobā
Spire (c. 1830 A.D.
V's bed-room
Kāśiviśveśvar
Solākhandi (c. 1
Mandapa (c. 162
Inscribed slab (
Cloister
Māruti
Garuḍa
Dipmāls
Vṛndāvan
Hanumān
Gaṇpati
Inscription (161
Nāmdev
Cokha Samādhī
W
S
N
E

Pl. 3.

Viṭhobā's temple

at

Paṇḍharpūr

Scale : 1 inch = 67 feet.

To the Bhīmā

more impressive than the temple of Paṇḍharpūr. The former would have been worthier to contain the far-famed god than the latter, but it is actually only an empty catafalque.

The main entrance of the temple is at the east, i.e. on the side facing the river. Several steps climb from the level of the street to the threshold of the door. On the lowest step there is a bust of Nāmdev and the door is called after him. It is said that this saint took his Samādhī at that very place. A few yards at the east of that door there is the Samādhī of Cokhāmeḷā, the Mahār saint, which is commemorated by a dressed stone. Before the temple was opened to Harijans, the low caste pilgrims were obliged to stop here and to perform their devotions to Viṭhobā from that place for they were not allowed to enter the temple.

The Nāmdev gate opens on a narrow passage with three rooms on each side where devotees are lodged. Four steps lead down from the passage to a large paved quadrangle. On each side of it runs a cloister with an inner and an outer row of arches and each inner arch leads to a small room for devotees; within the limit of the quadrangle are several dīpamālas, a vriṅḍāvana, a nīma tree and two small shrines dedicated respectively to Garuḍa and to Mārutī. The western part of the quadrangle is covered with a high wooden sabhāmaṅḍapa used for song services and devotional dances.

Along the western side of the quadrangle runs a narrow stone-maṇḍapa built on a raised platform : the ceiling is formed of large blocks of dressed stones resting on pillars : they must have been stones of a former building for one of them bears an inscription dated 1237 A.D. This maṇḍapa leads through three doors in its western wall to a sixteen-pillared maṇḍapa where pilgrims gather to attend the ceremonies. A door in the western wall leads to a smaller four pillared room which is in fact the first room of the shrine itself. In its north-east corner is a large recess used as a bed-room for the god. From this four-pillared room a small arch leads to an antechamber which opens on the garbhagṛha, a small square room where on a small altar attached to the back wall stands the image of Viṭhobā. In front of the image is a wooden bar to prevent overcrowding.

To the north of this shrine and slightly eastwards of it is the Rukhmiṇī shrine which consists of a sabhā maṇḍapa, a pillared hall, an antechamber and the garbhagṛha, to the south of Viṭhobā's shrine is the shrine dedicated to Lakṣmī which consists of a porch, a pillared-hall, an antechamber and a garbhagṛha. Near this latter shrine is a wooden maṇḍapa and further south a verandah built in a Mughal style. A small shrine dedicated to Vyaṅkobā is near the gate called after him.

It is clear from the above description that the great temple is not a coherent structure : it is rather a group of buildings of various shapes and ages built within an irregularly shaped wall. There has been no plan in the building of those structures nor any aim at artistic achievement. This is one of the reasons why the temple, although famous for its holiness, has attracted so little notice from travellers and tourists in the past. But this very defect is welcomed by the historian who has a clearer idea of the history of the temple and its development from the dates of these constructions.

The temple itself is a small structure without any artistic pretence; around it, several other shrines, halls, lodgings, have been built in the course of time according to the need or the devotion of the pilgrims. The oldest part of the temple is the image itself of Viṭhobā. We have seen in our last chapter that it was difficult to determine its age with any accuracy. As it does not belong to the Hemaḍpantī style of sculpture, we may suppose that the builders at the time of Hemādrī merely rebuilt or at least enlarged an older temple. As it is unlikely that the place where the image stands has ever been changed, for that would be against all Indian traditional custom in temple-building, we may infer that the Hemāḍpantī structure built in the second half of the thirteenth century was a very extensive one. We have two remains of that temple, the stone-slab where the famous inscription of Rāmacandra and Hemādrī is carved, and the so-called Nāmdev gate. It consists of two pillars and two pilasters guarded by side-railing of stone, and of the sidewalls of the gateway. They belong to the Hemāḍpantī style of the beginning of the thirteenth century. The faces of several of the figures have been wilfully disfigured.

The distance between the seat of the image and the gate is long which means that the temple of that period must have had a great extension. The disfigurement of the sculptures shows that the temple must have been destroyed by the Muslims in their iconoclastic zeal. This destruction must have happened after 1311 A.D. for there is an inscription of that date near the Samādhī of Cokhāmeḷā which means that the temple was still standing at that date.

No archaeological remains can help to know the fate of the temple from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth. During those two centuries Paṇḍharpūr was under the Muslim yoke. A legend refers to the construction of a new temple by a Muslim Sultan of Bidar under the request of Cāṅgdeva. But Mahipati in his Bhaktavijaya does not give the name of the king and it is difficult to know when this Cāṅgdeva was living. Anyhow there is no way of knowing from the actual temple of any temple built during the fourteenth or the fifteenth century.

Again according to unsupported traditions, the image of Viṭhobā was shifted to Vijayānagar at the end of the fifteenth century, and brought back to Paṇḍharpūr at the beginning of the sixteenth. The actual shrine of Viṭhobā, consisting of the four-pillared hall, the antechamber and the garbhagṛha, must have been built in the beginning of the sixteenth century, possibly when the image was brought back from Vijayānagar. To this structure was added in 1621 the narrow maṇḍapa which forms the western side of the quadrangle. It must have been the eastern limit of the temple at that time, and built out of the ruins of former constructions, as is shown by the incribed slab in the ceiling. This maṇḍapa was built by Māṇkojī Narāyaṇa Nāyaka and his brother Appājī of Peḍgāon. At the same time the temples of Rukmiṇī and of Lakṣmī must have been built as they belong to the same style as the shrine of Viṭhobā. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the constructions thus consisted of the three temples, which were no more than small village temples. Then the temple began to extend in the beginning of the seventeenth century with the building of the maṇḍapa.

One century later, the temple regained nearly its extension of the time of Hemādrī by the building of the two cloisters enclosing the quadrangle. Inscriptions in these cloisters show that they were built about 1738. It is most probable that the eastern wall was also built at that time, the builders being careful to restore what was left of the Hemādrī temple. About the middle of the eighteenth century, the sixteen-pillared hall must have been built at considerable expenses for it is of very fine workmanship.

At the end of the eighteenth century, several other constructions were added. The stone maṇḍapa built over the eastern part of the quadrangle at the time of the last Peshwa, the dīpamālā on the left was built by a Hoḷkar, the verandah on the north side of the sixteen-pillared hall and the wooden Maṇḍapa were built over the western part of the quadrangle by the baḍvās. The verandah on the southern side of the sixteen-pillared hall was added in 1849 by the Pawār family of Dhār who donated also the wooden Maṇḍapa near the Lakṣmī temple.

No other important buildings were added after that time. Several apertures in the roof have been opened at the end of the last century for light and air. Electric lighting was fitted only a few years ago. Several small structures built in the quadrangle are not dated. The small shrine dedicated to Mārutī is an unusual feature in a Viṣṇu temple for it is usually found only in temples dedicated to Rāma. It is possible that it is due to the influence of Rāmdās who got the temple of Mārutī built in almost every village of Mahārāṣṭra. Rāmdās is said to have visited the temple of Viṭhobā.

The temple of Viṭhobā, as it stands to-day, may be said to be a composite "ensemble" of various buildings erected during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries A.D., that is during the period of the Marāṭha "renaissance". This could have been expected since Viṭhobā is one of the most popular gods among the Marāṭhas and closely connected with their history.

This popularity of Viṭhobā is largely due to the Vārkarī Panth which owes its existence to this god and his fame has spread throughout Mahārāṣṭra by their literature and their pilgrimages. In giving to this god this unique position among the others, they have contributed more than anybody else to the development of his temple in attracting many a wealthy pilgrim who generously provided for the erection of new buildings, the improvement of others, and the celebration of the ceremonies. It is therefore no small wonder to see that they have practically nothing to do with the temple itself.

The image of Viṭhṭhala is held in such veneration by the Vārkarīs that for them to have a darśana of it is the highest joy possible. "When my eyes rest on your image, My Beloved, I become overwhelmed with happiness", says Jñānadeva, and Tukārām, "This image is my happiness : I look at the beautiful face with love". Pilgrims are walking hundreds of miles to be able to see the image even for a little while. And yet the service of their beloved god is not in the hands of the Vārkarīs. The administration of the temple is in the hands of the baḍvās, a caste of Brahmins who are in charge of the various ceremonies performed in the temple and who collect the offerings and gifts brought by the pilgrims. There are therefore two distinct elements in the cult of Viṭhobā. The ritualistic worship carried on by the baḍvās, and the spiritual worship patronised by the Vārkarīs. As this chapter is concerned with the temple itself it deals with the ritualistic aspect of the cult of Viṭhobā.

We have seen that the administration of the temple is in the hands of the baḍvās who are deśastha Brahmins. They are the guardians of the temple property and jewels and they supervise the ceremonies and provide for the necessary things. They have the right over all money gifts, ornaments and other offerings. Every day a priest in charge, the divaskar, is chosen, with the duty to collect the offerings and to provide the oil, milk, sugar, etc. necessary for the rites.

Besides the baḍvās, there are seven kinds of priests connected with the ritual worship of Viṭhobā. The pujārī takes the main part in the worship of the god. He is in charge of the rites : he alone can bathe,

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[2] As many of the details concerning these rites are taken from *BG* 20 (Solapûr), we refer to it once for all. Those details have been checked by enquiries among pilgrims.

dress and undress the image, put fresh garlands around its neck, wave the lamps and burn frankincense.

The Benārī has the office of singing the various Sanskrit mantras suited to each rite.

The Paricāraka (etymologically the one who goes round i.e. who attends upon) is the chief attendant of the Pujārī. He must provide the necessary water for the various ablutions, get ready the incense and the lamps for the 'āratīs'. It is also his duty to distribute the ashes after the morning rites. The Haridāsa, (etymologically "the servant of the Lord") sings the various Marāṭhī hymns during the 'āratīs'. He does not enter inside the garbhagṛha but remains in the antechamber where he sings, accompanying himself with the small cymbals. These songs are taken from the Vārkarī poets.

The Diṅgre (from 'ḍiṅgara' a "boy") is the attendant who has to hold the mirror in front of the god and to spread on the ground between the altar and the bed-room the carpet called "pāulghaḍī'.

The Divaṭe is the torch-bearer. He must hold the 'maśāl' or the torch when after the night ceremony the god is going to his bed-chamber. He also accompanies the pālkhī when Viṭhobā's pādukas are taken out in procession on the Paurṇimā night of Kārtika and Āṣāḍha.

The Dāṅge is the mace-bearer. He must attend the ceremonies holding a gold or silver-plated mace in his hand, and accompany the pādukā procession. He, together with the Paricāraka, goes in the town to distribute the ashes after the morning rites.

The rites performed at Paṇḍharpūr are of two kinds : the daily rites and the extraordinary rites. The daily rites are divided into five services : 'Kākaḍāratī' at dawn, 'Pañcāmṛtapūjā' in the morning, 'Madhyāhṇapūjā' at noon, 'Aparāhṇapūjā, in the evening, and Śejāratī' at night. All these rites are a representation on the sacrificial level of the ordinary actions of a mother towards her child, the getting up, the washing, the dressing, the feeding, the putting in bed, etc. Each service consists of a certain pūjā and of several 'āratīs'. The pūjā consists in the various actions of the pujārī or celebrant, as washing the image, smearing it, dressing and adorning it and feeding it. The 'āratī' is the devotional waving of various lamps in front of the image.

The Kākaḍāratī begins at three A.M. It is called after the lamp used in the 'āratī' which consists of a Kākaḍā, i.e. a coarse wick of cloth. It is the rite of the awakening of the god. This rite is of the greatest antiquity since Nāmdev mentioned it in one of his abhangs.

At the appointed time the trumpeter of the temple blows his long instrument, called the Karṇā to warn the various attendants to gather in the sixteen-pillared hall. When everybody is there, the baḍvā in charge, *bathed and clad in a silk dhoti enters the temple holding the key of the* four-pillared room. He stops in front of the door of that room and with folded hands he prays the god to awake. He then opens the door, enters in the room, goes to the bed-room recess and removes the food offerings placed there the day before. Then the other attendants may enter the room except for the haridāsa who remains in the sixteen-pillared hall with the pilgrims admitted to see the āratī. Nobody is ever allowed to enter the four-pillared room unless he has recently bathed. When everybody is in, the pujā begins.

The pujārī first washes the feet of the image in milk and water carried by the paricāraka. He then removes all the garlands and flowers put on the image the day before and smears it with various perfumes. He puts fresh garlands round its neck and offers incense, lamps and food. Then the paricāraka gives to the pujārī the Kākaḍā brought by the baḍvā-in-charge and the pujārī slowly waves it in front of the god from the head to the feet. To see the god's face by this light is one of the pleasures of the pilgrim. While this waving is being done, the haridāsa sings suitable hymns from the sixteen-pillared room. As an example of those hymns we give here the translation of one of them :

(Kākaḍāratī)

1.

O Paṇḍharpūr, town without rivals,
O charming Bhīmā, maternal home of the Saints,
O Parabrahma, the unmanifested,
manifested under the form (of Viṭhobā)
standing erect on a brick,
His hands on his hips.

2.

Glory be to you, Pāṇḍuraṅga,
Glory be to you, root of our joy,
I shall wave the āratī,
Glory be to the benefactor of Puṅdarīka,
Glory be to God Pāṅḍuraṅga.
Gomatī, Godāvarī, Yamunā, Sarasvatī,
Kṛṣṇā, Tuṅgabhadrā, Bhāgīrathī,
In the morning and at noon,
Are coming to the Candrabhāgā
To wave in front of Viṭhobā
the lamps placed on gold plates.
Glory be to you Pāṇḍuraṅga .... etc.

3.

Sweet is the sound of the flute :
Govinda plays near the western pool.
There Nārada and Tumbaru sing.
Dhruva and Pralhāda full of joy and of love
become more happy still.
Glory be to you Pāṇḍuraṅga.

4.

Thus here thousands of holy places
and sacred rivers meet.
But they cannot be compared (in holiness) with one moment
spent with Pāṅḍuranga with Rakhumābāi at his left.
The Vedas tell your greatness,
And the three hundred and thirty three million gods
sing : Glory to you .... Glory to you.
Such is the supreme god,
Viṭhu, Lord of Paṇḍharī,
Father of the Bhakta family,
Husband of Rakhumāī devī.
He will fulfil my heart's desire
If I reach the eternal bliss.
Kānhobā, the servant of Hari
Asks you for the gift of your love.
Glory be to you Pāṇḍuraṅga.

When this hymn is over, the baḍvā in charge gives to the pujārī a silver cup filled with fresh butter ('loṇī') and sugar, the pujārī offers it to the god and puts it into his mouth. Then he again waves a lamp filled with ghee ('nirañjan') and lighted camphor in front of the image, while the haridāsa is singing suitable hymns, some of which are given below :

(Yugē aṭhṭhāvīsa)[3]

1.

For twenty-eight Yugas, standing on a brick,
A divine beauty shines at the left of Rakhmāī.
For the salvation of the world, the Bhīmā
flows at the feet of Parabrahma

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[3] Nâmdevâcî Gâthâ, (edited by JOG.), V.N., No. 2089.

who has come to meet Puṇḍalīka.
Glory be to God, glory be to God, glory be to Pāṇḍuraṅga.
The beloved of Rakhumāī, the beloved of Rāhī,[4]
Come you nearest to my heart.

2.

Round his neck is a garland of Tulsī,
His hands are resting on his hips,
Round his loins is the yellow silk-cloth,
His forehead is smeared with musk.
Unceasingly the great gods come to see him,
Garuḍa and Hanumanta are standing in front of him.

3.

In Āṣāḍha and Kārtika the devotees arrive,
In the Candrabhāgā they perform their bath,
By seeing you they easily get the final liberation.
Nāmdev waves the lamp in front of Keśava.

The following abhang is sung during the waving of the lighted camphor :

(Āratī Anantācī)[5]

1.

It is impossible to celebrate the rites
Towards Viṭhu, the King of Paṇḍharī
In an eternal āratī,
The worship is celebrated by the mind.

2.

Mere words cannot describe him.
He is not found in the four Vedas :
Charmed by the faith of his devotees
out of his wish he assumed a body.

3.

Impossible to describe, pure and wise,
He is standing erect.

Ekā Janārdana has become the brick under his feet.

[4] Râhî, i.e. Râdhâ.
[5] Eknâthamahârâjâñcî Gâthâ, p. 474, No. 5.

This singing over and the āratī completed, all the pilgrims throw flowers at the image. Then the priest gives them the tīrtha (holy water) and the 'prasāda' (holy gift), as well as the flowers of the stale garlands. This distribution closes the morning rite of Kākaḍāratī.

After this ceremony the 'pujā' starts. The special name of this pujā, namely 'pañcāmṛtapujā' comes from the bathing of the image in five different liquids : milk, curds, ghee, honey and sugar. During the whole rite, the benāri recites the prescribed mantras.

The paricāraka brings in the water in a silver basin and the pujārī and his assistants undress the image, which is first bathed in water. Then the image is bathed in milk, smeared with ghee and sugar in order. Each bath is accompanied by a short pujā. Then last ablution is given with water, called Abhiṣeka and as a concluding part, water is poured out of a sea-conch over the head. While this rite is performed, the Vedic hymn called puruṣa sūkta' is recited. After the abhiṣeka comes the Maṅgalasnāna with scented oil and warm water. All the time while the image is left naked, a screen is set in front of it.

The image is then wiped and dressed with fresh garments, and its face is rubbed with sandal powder and scented oil. A turban is tied round its 'mukuṭa',and the forehead is smeared with sandal paste, while garlands are put round its neck. The ḍingre then presents a mirror in front of the image. Its feet are also rubbed with sandal paste and the rite ends with the waving of lighted incense sticks, the lamp of ghee and the offering of sweetmeats. Once this pujā is over, pilgrims are freely admitted to get a 'darśan' of the god.

The admission for getting a darśan of the god lasts till the 'mādhyānhapujā', i.e. till the afternoon ceremony. It chiefly consists in the meal given to the god accompanied with some washing and a new dressing; the pujārī removes the old garlands and all the garments: he then washes the face of the image and rubs fresh sandal paste on its brow. New garments are then put on the god, and a meal ('mahānaivedya') is offered to him. During the hot season townfolk bring cool water and sweets. When the meal is over the pilgrims are again admitted to take a 'darśan' of Viṭhobā.

The next rite called 'aparāhṇapujā' is celebrated at sunset. The paricāraka brings a ready filled incense-burner and some lamps, and the baḍavā a copper dish with flowers, flower garlands, nosegays, sandal powder, rice and a silver dish with food. The pujārī washes the feet of the image with water and the old sandal paste is removed, and fresh paste with rice and sandal oil is applied. Flower garlands and other adornments are then put on the image.

The haridāsa then starts the singing of the five 'padas' or songs in praise of Viṭhobā, and the water used for the washing of the feet is distributed to the pilgrims. The pujārī then proceeds to perform several āratīs with the lamps (dīpāratī), the incense burner (dhūpāratī) and camphor lamps (kāpurāratī) while Vedic mantras are sung by the audience. Light food or 'naivedya' is then offered to Viṭhobā while the following 'pada' is sung :

(Pada)

O You, gifted with every quality,
please eat,
O Hari, our friend, Holy one,
please eat
The cream on the milk,
The sugar from Rāyapūr,
The small sweetmeats,
The rice with curds spiced with ginger,
Salt and pepper.
Uddhava, the disciple of Cidghana
Wishes to eat what will remain.
O Gopāla Hari, our friend.

When the singing is over, the pujārī performs a last 'āratī', with the lamp filled with ghee while the abhang "yuge aṭṭhāvis" translated above is sung. This rite ends the evening 'pujā'. When all the ceremonies are over, the paricāraka empties the ashes of the lamps in a cloth and proceeds to mark the forehead of the pilgrims with them. He then gives some of these ashes to the ḍingre who starts distributing them in the western part of the town while he himself goes to the east to do the same.

The last ceremony of the day called 'śejāratī' consists in putting the god to bed or 'śeja'. It is performed at about ten P.M. and all the priests and assistants have to be present. The baḍvā opens the door of the bed-chamber set in the recess of the four-pillared room and makes ready the couch of Viṭhobā. He puts a lighted lamp near the bed, together with sweet milk, sweetmeats and a spittoon. He also brings water to wash the god's feet.

The ḍingre then sweeps the path between the throne and the bed-chamber, sprinkles a little water on the floor and draws on it ornamental figures with white and coloured powders. He then spreads a long carpet covered with a cow's and Kṛṣṇa's footprints.

The ḍingre and the benārī stand in the antechamber, the ḍānge holding his maçe stands on onẹ side of the path, while the divaṭe holding a torch stands on the other side. The benārī recites Sanskrit stotras while the pujārī washes the god's feet. Then the benārī, from the antechamber where he is standing waves a lamp, and the pujārī proceeds to undress the god, puts fresh sandal-paste on his forehead and dresses him again for the night. He puts also fresh garlands round his neck and offers some sweets. Everybody then leaves the room except the baḍva who makes a last 'āratī' in waving five lights one after the other in front of the image. He then cleans the room and closes the door of the four-pillared room. The daily routine of the ceremonies is over.

Several modifications to this daily routine occur on feast days. Wednesdays and Saturdays are specially consecrated to Viṭhobā. On these days, unless they happen also to be 'Ekādaśīs', or 'Paurṇimās', early in the morning between the Kākaḍāratī and the Pañcāmṛtapujā, the god is washed with scented oil, sweet scented powders and milk.

Each eleventh day of the lunar month, or Ekādaśī is a day of fast for the Vārkarīs. On these days, they must observe a fast i.e. eat only sweets, milk, nuts, dates and fruits. Some of them keep an absolute fast for the whole day. On the night of these days, Viṭhobā does not repair to his bed-chamber but a special āratī is held after the usual 'śejāratī', and the evening food offered to him is cooked without water. A watch is kept for the whole night in front of the image.

On the Ekādaśīs of Kārtika[6] and Āṣāḍha[7] the whole routine is suppressed except for the pañcāmṛtapujā. The festival lasts from the 'ekādaśī, to the 'Paurṇimā'. During these five days, the bed-chamber remains closed, the bed is set outside, and Viṭhobā does not go to bed so that the pilgrims are able to have a 'darśana' at any time of the day or of the night. Otherwise, due to their large numbers, many of them would be unable to see the image. At the end of that period a special bath is given to Viṭhobā. The god is supposed to be fatigued by this continual flow of pilgrims and so he must be refreshed and washed until he is completely recovered. This rite is called 'prakṣālapujā'.

On the days which occur between the entrance of the sun in the Sagīttarius mansion and its entrance in the Capricorn mansion rice with lentils are offered to Viṭhobā and instead of a turban a plain cloth is tied round his head, above the ears.

From the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the Māgha[8] month, or Vasant day, till the fifth day of the dark fortnight of the Phālguna month,[9] called Raṅgapañcamī day, the god's feet are sprinkled with the red powder called 'gulāl' and a half turban is bound round his head.

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[6] October-November.

[7] June-July.

[8] January-February.

[9] February-March.

During the nine days of the Gokuḷāṣṭamī festival, several entertainments are arranged in front of the image. Every day Viṭhobā is dressed in special garments, hymns are sung, dancing and purāṇic story telling are held, meals are offered to the brahmins.

Formerly the first dark day of 'āṣāḍha' and the second dark day of 'Kārtika' a gruel of wheat mixed with curds was prepared in the temple. It was called Nāmdev's gruel for it was the custom of Nāmdev to prepare it in honour of child Kṛṣṇa playing in 'Gokuḷa'. On these days, the haridāsa was led into the temple with great ado, with a slipper on his head. The vessel full of gruel was set near the Māruti shrine in the quadrangle and was broken, after which the gruel was distributed to the audience as a prasāda.

Besides these special ceremonies which are held in the temple itself, many other rites are performed by the pilgrim on his way to Paṇḍharpūr. They will be described in the next chapter.

Such is the great temple of Paṇḍharpūr which attracts every year huge crowds of pilgrims. It must be noticed again that the Vārkarīs have no part in its administration or in the performance of the various rites. Although there has been no glaring mismanagement, as happened in the famous temple of Purī in the years 1951 and 1952, although there have not been bitter complaints against the priests as happened in the Tirupati shrine, the pilgrims often complain that the baḍavas show too keen an interest in the collecting of money offerings and other gifts. But this does not make them less eager to come for the great pilgrimages and an ever increasing number of people is on these occasions trying to take a darśan of Viṭhobā.

CHAPTER IV

THE PILGRIMAGE

The more spectacular activity of the Vārkarīs is their annual pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr. They must go there at least twice a year for 'Āṣāḍī ekādaśī' and for 'Kārtikā ekādaśī' and if possible for Caitrī ekādaśī. The more solemn is the pilgrimage of Āṣāḍhi ekādaśī. On Kārtikī ekādaśī the pilgrims are left to their individual devotions, but on the Āṣāḍhī they go to Paṇḍharpūr in groups, gather together in a kind of General Assembly of the Panth and take part in the various ceremonies.

The pilgrimage of Āṣāḍha is the pilgrimage of the whole Panth, it is a very characteristic aspect of the Vārkarī Panth. The pilgrimage is the gathering of all' the members of the Panth, the living as well as the dead, at the feet of Viṭhobā. In many other Hindu sects the 'gurus', the 'swāmis', successors of the earlier 'ṛṣis' are highly honoured and respected by their followers and disciples : indeed one could say that it is a common feature of Hinduism. But in the Vārkarī Panth, this veneration takes a very peculiar aspect. Not only are the 'santas' venerated as avatāras of god at the place of their Samādhī by the group of their disciples and their descendants, not only temples are erected in their honour, but they are considered as still present in a spiritual way, as still living for the good of the community. This fact is at the root of the very existence of the pilgrimage.

When he lived, the 'santa'[1] used to go on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr with the group of his disciples. While on the way, he assumed a very special holiness in the eyes of the ordinary Vārkarī, he was God himself walking across the country, giving to everybody the possibility to come near him and receive his blessing. To have a darśana of a 'santa' on his way to Paṇḍharpūr was to have a 'darśana' of Viṭhobā himself : the 'santa' was thus an intermediary between God and the people, a special messenger to carry on to God the various requests of the faithful and their prayers. This idea is expressed in many an abhang as in the one which is sung every day by the pilgrim, the translation of which is given below :

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[1] In spite of the similarity of form and of meaning between the words 'santa' in Marathi and 'saint' in English, it is better not to translate the first by the latter because they derive from different roots. For the etymology of 'santa' see ; PHATAK, N. R. *Srī Jñānesvara*, p. 2.

(Tumhī sanakādika santa)[2]

1.

O you, Sanaka and the other santas
You are called compassionate.

2.

Please grant me this favour,
Give to God my greetings.

3.

Beg for me the compassion
of the Lord of Paṇḍharī.

4.

Says Tukā :

Let him remember me,
And send me quickly
his messengers to fetch me.

Tukārām in another abhang expresses the same idea under a new aspect. As a sinner he feels unworthy to go in person to the temple of Viṭhobā, so he asks the santas who have the privilege to stand at the feet of the god to intercede for him :

(Kripāḷu sajjana)[3]

1.

O you kind and compassionate Santas
Grant me this favour;

2.

Remind Pāṇḍuraṅga of my existence,
Tell him my prayers and my yearnings.

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[2] *IP* 1591.
[3] *IP* 2256.

3.

I am without a Lord, a destitute, a sinner.
Do not drive me away from your feet.

4

Says Tukā :

If you plead my cause,
Hari will not forget me.

The 'santas' are considered to be the messengers sent by the people to the god of Paṇḍharī. They are even more than their representatives because they take on their own shoulders the sins of the devotees, and through them God will forgive. Tukārām compares them to a mother :

(Lenkurāce hita)[4]

1

A mother's only care
Is the good of her children.

2

Such is the nature of Compassion :
An unselfish love.

3

She carries the burden of her children in her womb
She endures everything from them.

4

Says Tukā :
O Santas, My burden is on your shoulders.

The name 'santa' in Vārkarī terminology is not restricted to the recognised 'guru', but also applied to any pilgrim on the way to Paṇḍharpūr, as if the road had somehow the power to sanctify. Santas make the road holy and in its turn the road becomes sanctifying.

The pilgrim is the object of universal veneration. The inhabitants of the villages which he happens to cross on his way, feel that it is their duty to provide for his food and lodging. When one considers that at the time of the great pilgrimage, pilgrims number some thousands, such a duty assumed by the villagers seems to be no mean burden.

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[4] *IP* 1741.

The most sacred part of the pilgrim are his feet, they are in contact with the sacred road, they carry the devotee to his beloved God, they bear most of the hardnesses of the way. So it is a very common, and very meritorious action to kiss them. In a charming and symbolical abhang Tukārām expresses this holiness of the 'santas' feet.

(Hoīn khaḍe goṭe)[5]

1

I should like to become the small pebbles
or the big stones, or the dust
of the road which leads to Paṇḍharpūr.
Thus would I be under the feet of the Santas.

2

What else could I ask you for?
It is an everlasting and fearless bliss
With no bitter after-taste.

3

I should like to become the shoes or the sandals
on the feet of all the santas.
I should like to be a cat, or a pig, or a dog
and stay near them to eat their crumbs.

4

I should like to be the step built on the brink
of a well or or on the bank of the brook or of the river
Where the Santas would walk on.

5

Says Tukā :
O God, my Mother,
Put me in any place provided the feet of the Santas
touch me,
Give me that, and I'll not be afraid to be reborn.

The feet of the 'Santas' are venerated even after the death of their owner under the form of the 'pādukās'. While living, the 'guru' went to Paṇḍharpūr. After his death he does not cease to take part in the pilgrimage, because his disciples carry his 'pādukās' in a 'Pālkhī'

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[5] *IP* 4092.

with them on their way to Paṇḍharpūr. Those 'pādukās' which differentiate the various processions converging on Paṇḍharpūr are the symbols of the living presence of the great saints of the past among the community of the Vārkarīs whom they still guide through their writings. Each procession going to Paṇḍharpūr for the great pilgrimage is called a 'Pālkhī', from the name of the palanquin which contains the 'pādukās' of a holy man. It is difficult to know the number of those 'pālkhīs', because new ones are started even now, while old ones cease to exist. It is however, possible to know the number of the 'pālkhīs' for a fixed date; we may take the pilgrimage of 1951 as an instance. Information concerning the number, the names and the ways of these 'pālkhīs were gathered from the official list drawn up by the Health Department of Paṇḍharpūr Municipality, from the list given by Principal S.V. Dandekar in his booklet on the Vārkarīs, and from the personal observations of the writer.

According to the official list there were twenty-five 'pālkhīs' which took part in the pilgrimage of 1951. Half a dozen more, not mentioned in that list, must be added, together with the dozen or so of those which stay permanently in Paṇḍharpūr. In all about forty 'pālkhīs present at the pilgrimage, which number is a clear sign of the present vitality of the Vārkarī Panth.

A glance at the map will show from where the various 'pālkhīs' start their journey to Paṇḍharpūr, and the regions they cross on their way. (PL. 4). This will give a fairly accurate idea of the geographical extent of the influence of the Vārkarī Panth. If Paṇḍharpūr is taken as the focal point, it becomes clear that all the pālkhīs come from the north and the west. All are situated within a sector between the West-South-West direction and the East-North-East. All the southern countries are bereft of pālkhīs. Nevertheless, it must be noted that pilgrims from outside Mahārāṣṭra are coming to Paṇḍharpūr, chiefly from Kannaḍa and Telugu speaking countries. Thus, the country where the 'pālkhīs' are situated is bordered by the Sahyadri on the west, the Tāpī on the north and a line joining Nāgpūr to Kolhāpūr on the east. It is within this large triangle that the cult of Viṭhobā is presently living.

It must be noticed that this triangle consists of the Marāṭhī speaking countries only, and that nearly the whole of the Marāṭhī speaking population is included in it, which means that the Vārkarī Panth exists wherever Marāṭhī is spoken and only where it is spoken. The Vārkarī Panth is thus purely Mahārāṣṭrian, and as the Vārkarīs are the chief devotees of Viṭhobā it must be said that the cult of Viṭhobā is actually purely Mahārāṣṭrian. This is, however, a relatively recent fact, and the extension of the Vārkarī Panth over the whole of Mahārāṣṭra is probably not very much older than the date of Tukārām and Śivājī. Most of the Pālkhīs have been started within the last fifty years. It would be interesting to know the history of each of these Pālkhīs; unfortunately, the material for such studies is not available.

One of the striking characteristics of the map of the 'Pālkhīs' is the situation of Paṇḍharpūr. As this city is the centre of attraction of the processions we could have expected that it would be situated at the geographical centre of our triangle. The fact is that Paṇḍharpūr is situated on the border line of the region covered by the 'Pālkhīs'. The map of the processions is not like a wheel the arms of which converge towards the axis, but like an open fan. It looks as if the cult had propagated from Paṇḍharpūr towards the north wherever Marāṭhī was spoken. Not only is Paṇḍharpūr not in the centre of the Marāṭhī-speaking countries, but it is quite possible that in former times it was situated within the boundaries of Kannaḍa-speaking countries. Therefore, the fact that the cult of Viṭhobā is actually purely Mahārāṣṭrian does not necessarily means that it was originally so.

The more important as well as the oldest of these 'pālkhīs' is the 'pālkhī' of Jñāneśvara which starts from the village of Āḷandī, near Poona. This 'pālkhī' will be studied in detail below. To get a clearer view of the various 'pālkhīs', it is possible to classify them into four groups, according to the places from where they start : we can therefore distinguish the Berar group, the Deśī group, the Kolhāpūr group, and the Marāṭhvāḍā group.

The Northernmost group consists of nine pālkhīs, the starting point of which is situated in the valley of the upper Tāpī, i.e. in Berar. This group is dominated by the spiritual personality of Muktābāi, the sister of Jñānadeva. The traditional place where she took her 'Samādhī' was considered to be Edalābād, not far from the town of Burhanpūr in the Khāndesh district (PL. No. 7). But it was discovered that the true 'Samādhī' of Muktābāi was at Mehun, 15 miles east of Bhusawal and a new Pālkhī was recently started from there (PL. 4, No. 8). The memory of Muktābāi is also venerated at Jalgaon from where another pālkhī starts (PL. 4. No. 9). From Mahekar in the Buldhana district starts the Pālkhī which commemorates the famous Nṛsiṁhasarasvatī, the guru of Eknāth's guru, Janārdanaswāmī, (PL. 4. No. 6.). Nṛsiṁha lived towards the end of the fifteenth century. It is also from the Buldhana district, at Dhāṇegaon, that the pālkhī of Svarupānanda starts, (PL. 4. No. 5). Umarāvattī venerates the memory of Śeṣanārāyaṇa and sends a pālkhī to Paṇḍharpūr called after him (PL. 4. No. 4). Saṅkara Mahārāj is venerated at Māhulī in the Umarāvattī district, and gives his name to the procession which starts from this place, (PL. 4. No. 3). In the same district, at Koṇḍaṇpūr, there is a temple dedicated to Rukhmiṇī, the wife of Viṭhobā, from which a pālkhī starts, (PL. 4. No. 2). Finally from Nāgpūr comes the Śrī Bhūteśvara pālkhī, which has the longest way to go before reaching Paṇḍharpūr, (PL. 4. No. 1).

All these pālkhīs of the Berar groups reach Paṇḍharpūr by various ways, but all have to cross the Marāṭhī part of the Hyderabad state. Thus many villages in the Biḍar, Parbhaṇī and Aurangābād districts get the possibility to honour and serve the 'santas' and other pilgrims on their way to Paṇḍharpūr. In spite of their location within a Muslim state they can participate in that way to the Mahārāṣṭrian spiritual movement. It is significant that the Vārkarī movement does not recognise these artificial boundaries which as a matter of fact became permanent only under the British rule.

The second group is composed of the pālkhīs the starting point of which is in Hyderabad. Two of them are connected with Eknāth who lived and died at Paiṭhan, the ancient capital of the Śātavāhana rulers, and the cradle of Marāṭhī literature. From Paiṭhan starts the pālkhī called after Eknāth (PL. 4. No. 10) and from Aurangābād the one called after his guru Janārdanaswāmī, who was the governor of the Daulatābād fortress, (PL. 4. No. 11). Another pālkhī has its starting place in Hyderabad but further south. It is the Jñānobā Mahārāj pālkhī which comes from Tuḷjāpūr, the sacred hill consecrated to Bhavānī, one of the favourite goddesses of the Marāṭhas, (PL. 4. No. 27).

The 'Deśī' group is the most important. From Trimbak starts the pālkhī which commemorates Nivṛttinātha, the elder brother of Jñānadeva, where the former is said to have received the spiritual initiation from the hand of Gahininātha, (PL. 4. No. 12). From Āḷandī as we have seen, the Jñāneśvara pālkhī starts, (PL. 4. No. 15.), and from Sāswaḍ the pālkhī of Sopāndev, the third brother of Jñānadeva, (PL. 4. No. 18.), and from the temple of Dehū comes the Tukārām pālkhī, (PL. 4. No. 16), from Sāswaḍ again the Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa pālkhī, (PL. No. 17), from Dahiṭhan near Śrigonda the Limbarāj Mahārāj pālkhī, (PL. 4. No. 14), and finally from Saḍe the Balabhīma Mahārāj pālkhī, (PL. 4. No. 13).

The fourth group of pālkhīs consists of eight more recent processions. The southernmost is the Purṇānanda Mahārāj pālkhī which comes from Bhognul in the Belgaon district (PL. 4. No. 25). The Goraknāth pālkhī which starts from Śirāḷe in the Sātārā district is called after a grove sacred to the memory of the famous Kānphaṭā ascetic Gorakhnāth (PL. 4. No. 23). At Koḷe, a small village south-west of Karhāḍ in Sātārā is a temple consecrated to a Vārkarī santa of the nineteenth century, called Ghāḍge Bāvā. One of his disciples, called Kuśābā organised a pālkhī in his honour (PL. 4. No. 22.). From the hill consecrated to santa Macchindranāth comes a pālkhī called after him. This hill is a well known gathering place of various 'gosāvīs' and 'bairāgīs' (PL. 4. No. 24). The Jayarāmaswāmī pālkhī starts from Vaḍgāon in the Sātārā district (PL. 4. No. 21.) and the Sekujī Bovā Pālkhī from Śirasvāḍī near Piṅgaḷī in the same district (PL. 4. No. 20). Also in Sātārā district, the Tukārām Mahārāj pālkhī, created recently by the disciple of Dādā Mahārāj Sātārkar, starts from Trepute near Koregaon (PL. 4. No. 19). Then from Maṅgaḷveḍhe starts a pālkhī (PL. 4. No. 26.) commemorating Dāmājī Pant, the celebrated official under the Bahmani rulers who during a bitter famine, distributed the State stores to the starving Brahmins of the town, and was saved from the resentment of his Muslim master only by the miraculous intervention of Viṭhobā disguised as a Mahār. Finally from Sajjadgad, as a token of good understanding was recently started a pālkhī called after samartha Rāmdās (PL. 4. No. 28.).

To the above-mentioned pālkhīs must be added some not mentioned in the official lists, for instance the Tapakirī Bovā pālkhī coming from Ciñcgaon, the Cokhobā-Vaṅkā pālkhī coming from Mehumpūr, and those which permanently stay in Paṇḍharpūr, like the Narhari Sonār pālkhī, the Rohidāsa pālkhī, the Santābāi pālkhi, the Cokhobā pālkhī, and the pālkhīs of the two Nāmdevs. All these 'santas' having taken their Samādhī at Paṇḍharpūr, their Pādukās do not have to travel like those of the others.

The number of these pālkhīs shows the popularity of the Vārkarī panth in the whole of Mahārāṣtra. When they all meet at Wākhrī before entering together in the holy city of Paṇḍharpūr they form a living history of the Panth (PL. 5). All the great holy men of the past, all the famous gurus, meet again symbolised by their pādukās and actuated by their disciples, to form, together with all the pilgrims, this community of the saints in the midst of which the devotee every year finds a unique climate of prayer and a reminder of all his obligations. This symbolic presence of the past Santas gives to the Vārkarī Panth its consistency with its tradition and the spiritual "profondeur" of its teachings.

Says Tukārām :

(Ghesī tarī gheī)[6]

1

Mind : if you want to meet any one
Go to the saints; think of nothing else.

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[6] *IP* 1240.

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2

God is their unique treasure,
They talk of nothing else.

3

Mind : if you want to live with any one,
Live with the saints; have no other companions.

4

Mind : if you want to sit down with any one,
Sit amidst the saints: only they possess wisdom.

5

Mind : if you want to go anywhere,
Go where the saints live: there you'll find peace.

6

Says Tukā :
Mind : Saints are an ocean of bliss
and fulfill all your longings.

The Jñāneśvara pālkhī, the oldest of the pālkhīs, is also the more traditional as well as the better attended. It is according to its followers the more faithful to the Vārkarī tradition, some others having been commercialised.

This pālkhī starts from Āḷandī and reaches Paṇḍharpūr by a way which never alters its course. The distance is of about one hundred and fifty miles. The true pilgrim must walk all the way. Āḷandī, the place where Jñāneśvara took his 'samādhī is also a centre of pilgrimage and some devotees do nothing but walk to Paṇḍharpūr and back to Āḷandī all their life.

The procession crosses several towns where new pilgrims join it. Poona is the first of those towns and the more important, and the procession stops there two days to enable the Vārkarīs who cannot join the pālkhī to get a 'darśana' of the 'pādukās of Jñānadeva. From Poona the Pālkhī follows a southwards course and climbs over a ghāṭ before reaching the old historic city of Sāswaḍ where a temple commemorates the 'Samādhī' of Sopāndev, a brother of Jñānadeva. From Sāswaḍ, the road goes down a valley, skirts the Jejurī rocks crowned by the Khaṇḍobā temple, and reaches the bank of the Nīrā river. After crossing this river the road passes through the village of Lonand where many people arrive from Poona by bus or train and join the procession which numbers *then about five thousand people. From* Lonand to Paṇḍharpūr *the road follows* a constant direction east-south-east keeping between a spur of the Sahyādrī range and the bed of the Nirā river. It crosses several villages and small towns, Taraḍgaon, the *ancient capital of* Phalṭan, Barad, Natepute, Māḷsiras, Velāpur, Shegāon, Vākhrī and finally reaches Paṇḍharpūr. (See : PL. 6).

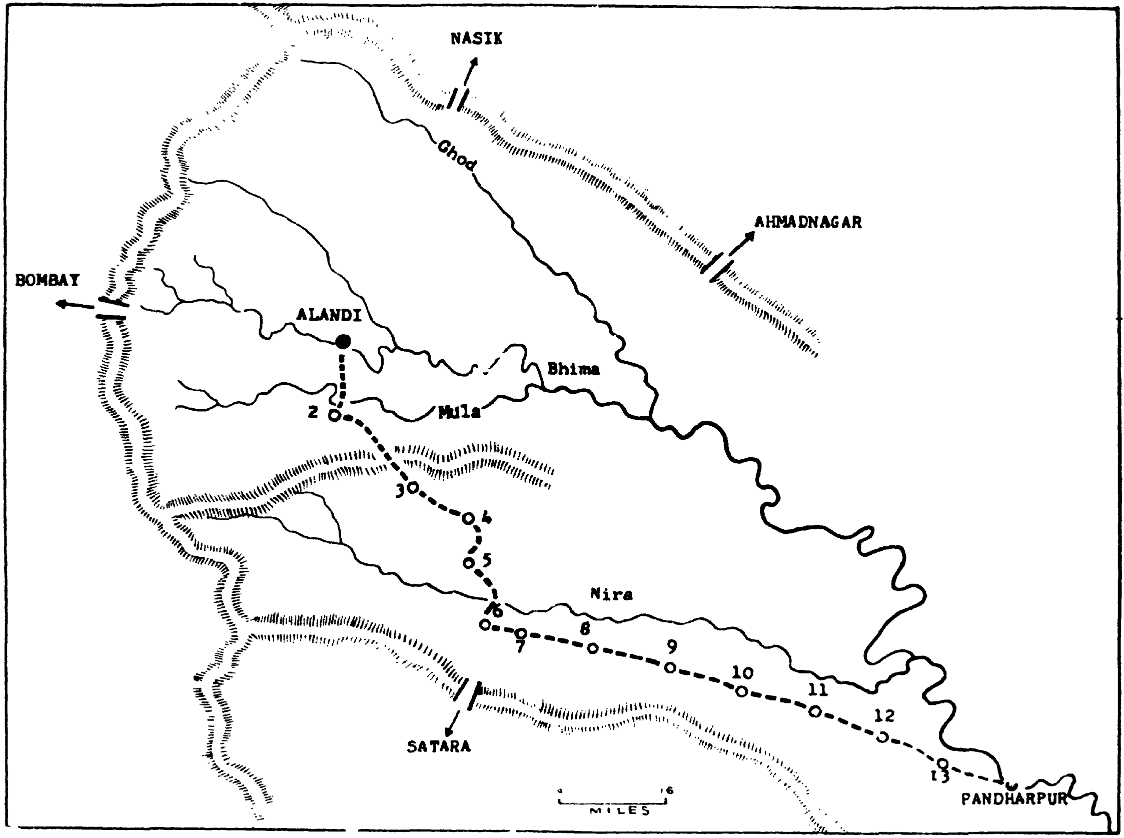
The pilgrims like to compare their procession with a river which starts as a small brook and slowly becomes a large river as it is nearing its goal. Keeping this line of comparison we can say that this procession collects all the waters of the Nīrā valley, where most of the holiest Vārkarī places are situated. The description of this pālkhī which follows could be applied, 'mutatis mutandis', to any other pālkhī, and gives a fair picture of the model pālkhī.

The word 'pālkhī' really means the palanquin in which the 'pādukās' of a saint are carried. This type of palanquin is an ancient conveyance and was in common use in Marāṭha times for all the state occasions to carry the rājās and officials. It is a very simple affair which consists of a long pole curved upwards in its middle from which a small wooden platform with a frame-work hangs. The travellers have to squat on the cushions disposed on the platform. This kind of litter is used in Mysore to carry the State sword and in that case it is adorned with carvings and inlayings.

The palanquin in which Jñānadeva's pādukās are carried is quite elaborate: the pole is covered with silver plating, the seat is inlaid with precious metals and the frame-work is finely carved. Its weight is considerable and eight to ten men are required to carry it on their shoulders. On the way, it is placed on a four-wheeled bullock cart dragged by two strong bullocks.

This palanquin is the centre of the procession because it carries the pādukās of Jñāneśvara. The pādukā is a kind of wooden sandal which merely consists of a wooden sole and a wooden peg. It is the traditional footgear of the Hindu ascetic because no leather is used in its make. The Jñāneśvara pādukās are carved on a heavy block of silver. The word pādukā in Marāṭhī means also the footprints, specially the footprints of holy men after their departure from this earth. The place of their Samādhī is usually indicated by a stone on which footprints are carved. This custom was already practised in Buddhist times to commemorate the death of famous monks as well as at the time of the Rāmāyaṇa where it is said that Bharata venerated the Pādukās of Rāma. The metallic pādukās correspond to the 'utsava-vigraha' or metallic substitutes for the image of a temple used in procession. But their significance is different: the pādukās are not idolatrous representations of a god, but

Plate 6.


NASIK
AHMADNAGAR
BOMBAY
ALANDI
Ghod
Bhima
Mula
Nira
SATARA
PANDHARPUR
2
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16
MILES

1. Aḷandi
2. Pooṇe
3. Sāsvaḍ
4. Jejurī
5. Valhe
6. Lonand
7. Taraḍgāon
8. Phalṭan
9. Barad
10. Natepute
11. Mālsiras
12. Velāpūr
13. Shegāon
14. Wakhrī
15. Paṇḍharpūr

Route of the Jñāneśvar Pālkhī. 20 - - - Serial no. of the night stops.

symbolical expression of the spritual presence of a 'Santa'. In some of the other pālkhīs, the palanquin carries also paintings or images representing the 'Santas' which is a concession to the idolatrous tendencies of popular worship. But the palanquin of Jñāneśvara, more faithful to the spiritual tradition, contains only the pādukās of Jñānadeva.

The word 'pālkhī' which as we have seen means "palanquin", came to be used as a name for the whole procession, and it is in this meaning that the word is used in this chapter. The Jñāneśvara pālkhī is not an indiscriminate mass of pilgrims gathered around a palanquin. It has a very definite organisation. The procession is divided into several groups of pilgrims called 'diṇḍīs'. Each 'diṇḍī' which may consist of thirty to one hundred members, is a group of devotees connected among themselves by family or caste ties. Sometimes it is a group of disciples gathered round their 'guru'. In the Jñāneśvara pālkhī there are 'diṇḍīs' of tailors, of merchants, of villagers, etc. One of these 'diṇḍīs' is a group of intellectuals gathered around the spiritual personality of Principal Dandekar, Professor of Philosophy at the Sir Parśurām Bāhu College in Poona.

Each 'diṇḍī has its fixed place in the procession according to the decision of the Organising Committee. These places are numbered beginning from the palanquin, the first numbers being the nearest to it and therefore much desired places: formerly there used to be sometimes a scuffle to get nearer places, but since the creation of the committee everybody peacefully abides by the decision of the committee. In the Jñāneśvara pālkhī there are about twenty of these 'diṇḍīs' before and after the palanquin. After each stop, each 'diṇḍī' automatically takes its appointed place in the procession and this contributes to give this procession its characteristic aspect of order.

When on the road, the procession proceeds according to the following order: first comes the red horseman holding a long pennon and mounted on a dancing horse. Next to it there is a white horse which has never been saddled and is said to be mounted by Jñāneśvara. Both the horses are held sacred, and people continually come to have a 'darśan' of them and reverentially touch their forehead. They also bring fodder to feed them. These horses are most probably a vestige of the days when Marāṭha mounted bodyguards accompanied all public functions. In the stable of the Mysore Palace there is still a horse, spotlessly white, which has never been ridden and which only takes part in the Dasarā procession.

Behind the horses come some of the 'diṇḍīs' with their ochre-coloured banners floating in the wind, then the cart carrying the pālkhī, then the rest of the diṇḍīs'; before and after the procession there is always a long series of bullock-carts carrying the families and camping-gear of the pilgrims.

There is also some organisation within each 'diṇḍī : the leader of the 'diṇḍī' is the 'vīṇā'-bearer. The 'vīṇā' is a stringed instrument which has been popularised by Tukārām and is always played by the chief singer in any bhajan: The vīṇā-bearer is the personification of Tukārām, and as such is the recognised head of the 'dīṇḍī'. Individual devotees sometimes carry also a vīṇā, and in that case the instrument is sometimes held by somebody, day and night. That is why all the male members of the family take charge of the vīṇā in turn while the others take a rest.

Near the 'vīṇā--bearer there is a drummer, playing one of these elongated drums called 'mṛdaṅga', hanging by a string form the neck of the player. As the instrument is heavy, several drummers take charge in turn when the way is long. The musical accompaniment of the singing is completed by the beating of the small brass cymbals salled 'ṭāḷ, carried by each of the male members of the 'diṇḍī'. Behind the men come the womenfolk of the diṇḍī, carrying often with them the cooking gear, or a water jug to quench the thirst of the pilgrims. Some of the women carry on their head a small brass flower-pot with a tiny branch of 'tulsī planted in its earth.

Every pilgrim wears a rosary of 'tulsī' beads round his neck, and many carry with them the ochre coloured banner, sometimes folded, sometimes flying in the wind. Each 'diṇḍī sees to the transport of the luggage of its members, either by lorries, or by bullock carts. A special lorry is attached to the pālkhī and carries the great tent which shelters the palanquin during the night. Another lorry lent by the Government carries a supply of drinkable water, but is often unable to cope up with the number of the pilgrims.[7]

We have seen that there is in the composition of the Pālkhī a very minute organisation. It is also noticeable in the march itself of the procession. As the time-table of each day is more or less the same, we shall give now a description of an average day during the pilgrimage.

The pālkhī starts usually towards 6 h. 30 in the morning. Five minutes before the departure, the big trumpet is blown to warn the pilgrims of the impending start. Many people have already started either because they cannot keep with the procession or because they prefer to walk at their own pace. Besides most of the bullock-carts and lorries have gone ahead so as not to be in the way of the procession.

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[7] Since 1951, various improvements took place : a Red-Cross van attends to the health of the pilgrims, a special tea-van prepares up to 2000 cups at every stop, and since 1959, every night, trucks from the Central Dairy at Poona bring fresh toned milk for the supply of the pilgrims.

Along the road which the pālkhī will take, the pilgrims are sitting in groups on both the sides and waiting to join the procession at the place appointed for their 'diṇḍī'. At the time fixed, the day before, the pālkhī-bearers take the palanquin on their shoulders and carry it in a run from the tent to the bullock-cart already on the road. Whenever the bearers carry the pālkhī on their shoulders it seems that it is a custom to do it running. When the palanquin has been placed on the platform of the bullock-cart, the procession starts, and the pilgrims join its ranks according to their diṇḍīs.

Before the pilgrim starts walking, he must bow to the pādukās and touch the dust of the road with his forehead. Then as soon as the procession is on its way, the singing begins. Each diṇḍī manages its own singing accompanied by its own vīṇā, mṛdaṅga, and ṭāḷs. The singing is thus not synchronised for the whole procession, and each 'diṇḍī' proceeds at its own pace and according to its own customs. This does not produce an impression of disorder, for the sound of the drum and of the cymbals of each 'diṇḍī' is loud enough for its members not to be inconvenienced by the singing of the other 'diṇḍīs'.

As long as the pālkhī is proceeding on the road, the singing goes on. This singing follows more or less the same pattern every day; during the morning march a number of abhangs are repeated in the same order. The pilgrimage does not progress very fast, chiefly at the end of the way when the number of pilgrims has grown to thousands. The speed is moreover rather irregular, sometimes slackening on account of some obstacle on the way, or when some 'diṇḍīs are stopping to perform the ritual dancing at the proper time.

After one or two hours on the road, the procession stops for the first halt, the longest of the day, being consecrated to the preparation of the midday meal. Usually the halting-place has been chosen near a river or not far from some well, and very often on the outskirt of a small hamlet, so that the pilgrims can have their bath and use the water for their cooking. Each of the villages through which the pilgrimage passes is warned of the arrival of the pālkhī and hawkers, pedlars and jugglers have gathered, the villagers and peasants from the neighbourhood have come, many to get a 'darśana' of the 'pādukās' and of the horses, and some to enjoy the village fair. As a remembrance of the fair, the children get the specialised artist to draw on their foreheads various patterns in green and red on a yellow background, while women have their arms tattooed in bluish designs.

The pilgrims themselves do not take part in those festivities which occur at each halting place and are not much in keeping with the spirit of the pilgrimage. The womenfolk of each group are busy preparing the meal while the men are resting or talking quietly on the roadside. When the meal is over, the signal for the departure is given and the procession re-forms in the same order as before. This afternoon march is the hardest of the day, often the longest, from four to six miles, and the walk under a scorching sun on the dusty road is tiring. The singing goes on as in the morning, and several abhangs are repeated every day, some are adapted to the day, and new abhangs are added according to the duration of the way. There is a short halt towards three or four o'clock in the afternoon and another one if the distance is too great. The pālkhī reaches the night halting place towards the evening and sometimes at night.

The lorry carrying the tents goes ahead of the procession and pitch the tents in a suitable open place. As the pilgrims reach that place, they gather in front of the big tent, the women in the centre and the men in a big circle around them. When everybody has arrived, the women squat down and a path is freed from the road to the tent. Then the pālkhī-bearers place the pālkhī on their shoulders and carry it at a run in front of the tent while the whole crowd sing together and all the cymbals and drums beat a rhythm going at a quicker and quicker pace. The macebearer then asks for silence, and a short- 'āratī' is performed in front of the pādukās which are then removed under the tent. The macebearer then announces the time of the departure for the following morning, and the list of the lost properties for that day, and then the pilgrims go to their night quarters.

The main 'diṇḍīs' which for many years have followed the procession have their lodgings reserved in the house of some friends or in a school building or in the hall of some temples. The officials of the pālkhī are lodged under the tents carried by the lorry, many small shelters are built and many spend the night in the open. Everywhere around campfires are kindled and the evening meal is prepared.

Nevertheless night does not stop the activities of the pālkhī. Every night a different 'diṇḍī' is in charge of the night function, and during the whole night 'bhajans' and 'kirtans' are performed in front of the big tent, attended by some pilgrims and the crowd of the villagers. It is the best moment for the Vārkarīs to impart their spiritual message to a great number of village folk, and they do it in a way admirably fitted to their audience which listens in a religious silence and participates in the singing.

Nothing can stop the procession on its way to Paṇḍharpūr because it must reach Wākhrī on the appointed day so as to enter Paṇḍharpūr on the eve of the Āṣāḍhī Ekādaśī day. As the pilgrimage takes place at the beginning of the rainy season, it is not infrequent that heavy rains suddenly break on the procession but the pālkhī usually does not stop and the singing goes on in spite of the rainswhich rapidly drench everybody to the bone. If a thunderstorm happens, the bullock-cart goes on peacefully and the pilgrims take shelter as best as they can under the trees of the wayside, or, if the halting place is not too far, run to seek shelter in the village.

After heavy rains, the rivers which the road crosses on causeways swell rapidly and sometimes cut the road with their torrential waters. But the procession manages somehow to cross them even if it is necessary to walk chest-deep in the water. Where the current is dangerous, a double line of volunteers spreads itself on either side of the road and the pilgrims walk safely between them. It is a common belief that no one ever gets sick from the rain and the cold on a pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr.

So the procession goes on, day after day, until on the eve of the feast it reaches Wākhrī. There, in the evening of the 9th day of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha, all the various pālkhīs meet. A place has been prepared in an open field for each pālkhī to stay the night. Then in the afternoon of the following day the various pālkhīs start for Paṇḍharpūr so as to arrive there towards four o'clock. The newly created pālkhīs lead the procession while the more ancient are in the rear, and the last of all is the Jñāneśvara pālkhī. It enters Paṇḍharpūr only towards eight o'clock at night. More than one hundred thousand people accompany the pālkhīs from Wākhrī to Paṇḍharpūr.

Each pālkhī has its appointed place to stay in Paṇḍharpūr, often a temple consecrated to the 'santa' whose 'pādukās' it carries : the pilgrims who have accompanied the procession on its way try to find a lodging in the town, among friends, or in one of the many 'dharmaśālās' specially built for that purpose. The real pilgrimage is over. Now each pilgrim may individually perform the various rites he intends to, the main one being to try to get a 'darśana' of Viṭhobā. Those have been described in the chapter on Paṇḍharpūr.

The pilgrims usually stay in Paṇḍharpūr until the 'paurṇimā' day and then return home individually. Only a few Vārkarīs, specially attached to the pālkhī, will carry it back to Āḷandī.

One of the aims of this pilgrimage is to bring into contact again the Vārkarī not only with his brothers in faith, but also with the 'santas' of the past. This is done chiefly by the various hymns which are sung on the way, and repeated day after day.

The singing of the hymns is one of the most important functions of the pilgrimage. As most of the pilgrims are illiterate, (but this does not mean that they are uncultured), the singing of religious hymns is for them what the reading of spiritual books is for other communities. It is through the medium of these hymns that the Vārkarī traditions and teachings are transmitted from generation to generation. This makes as long as the pilgrimage lasts, a true school of spirituality and it explains also why the Vārkarī is under obligation to take part in it. It is, so to say, a long retreat lasting a fortnight or more which the Vārkarīs undergo every year.

As many hymns are repeated every day, the pilgrims memorize them easily, with the marvellous memory of the people of oral tradition. There are some hymn-books, but only few are able to use them and in any case, they would be rather cumbersome to carry along during the many hours of walking in the pilgrimage when the rain may soak them and the sweating and the dust soil them. The best book a pilgrim can rely on is his memory.

The singing also helps to bring about within each 'diṇḍī' a sense of unity : it is the activity of a group in which each of its members has a part to play. A diṇḍī is proud to have a leader able to lead the singing even when the road is longer than usual, and singers who will eventually single themselves out in powerful soli which thrill the hearts of the pilgrims. And they make it a point never to stop singing whatever the weather be, under a scorching sun or a pelting rain.

The singing slowly prepares the hearts and the minds of the pilgrims to be in a fitting mood when they will reach Paṇḍharpūr. It makes them increasingly aware of the presence of the god they are going to meet. Little by little the devotee is liberated from his daily worries and enters a state of psychological peacefulness necessary for any spiritual achievement. It is indeed a spiritual way admirably fitted to the psychology of the Marāṭha country-folk who are thus able to benefit by the teachings of the Marāṭhī spiritual teachers.

This is another result of the singing of the 'abhaṅgs' : the faithful transmission of a literary tradition. As long as the pilgrims go on singing their poems, the great Bhakta poets are in no danger of falling into oblivion, because they live in the heart of a whole people. The names of Jñānadeva, Nāmdev, Eknāth, Tukārām, Niḷobā and all the others, remain in the memory of thousands of people who without having ever read one line of their writings know many of them by heart. Historians may dispute on the dates, the authenticity and the writers of many an abhang, but they do not go further in the understanding of these poets.

The simple pilgrim has a better insight into those whom he has made his friends.

To an onlooker the choice of the abhaṅgs sung during the pilgrimage may seem to be left to the inspiration of the moment. In fact, there is a traditional order according to which they have to be sung. There are abhaṅgs for the departure and abhaṅgs for the arrival, abhaṅgs for the morning and abhaṅgs for the afternoon, abhaṅgs for each day of the week. It is thus possible to give a fairly accurate account of the various hymns which compose the programme of the singing for an average day and it will not be useless for the understanding of the Vārkarī spirituality to give a translation of some of them and explain their succession with a few "rubrics".

It must however never be forgotten that the background of that singing is not the silence of a cloister or the majestic peace of a monastic chapel, but a noisy and dusty road where thousands are singing at the top of their voices to the accompaniment of the small brass-cymbals and of the drum beating a lancinating rhythm. Neither the happy smile of the pilgrims, nodding knowingly to each other while they abandon themselves to the rhythm of the song nor their enthusiastic walking dance which occasionally accompanies their singing should be forgotten while reading the translation of those hymns.

The programme of a day may be divided into two parts, the morning and the evening "office". The first "office" is sung during the first part of the way till the halt provided for the preparation of the noon meal. The second "office" is sung during the last part of the road and is occasionally interrupted by one or two halts, and lasts till the procession reaches its night quarters.

Each office is divided into several 'mālikās' or garlands of songs, consisting of several abhaṅgs. When all the members of the 'diṇḍī' are gathered together on the road and as soon as the pālkhī starts, the leader begins the first 'mālikā' which is repeated identically every morning.

FIRST MĀLIKĀ

Abhaṅg 1[8]

(rūpa pahātā locanī)

1

When my eyes rest on your image,
Happiness overcomes me.

---

[8] *O* 57.

2

He is the good Viṭhṭhala,
He is the good Mādhava.

3

By the many good deeds of my past lives
I have deserved the love of Viṭhṭhala.

4

Jñānadeva says :
In You rests all my happiness.

Abhaṅg 2.

(Vacana aikā)[9]

1

I beg of You, Lord of Kamalā,
Do listen to the words of the poor wretch that I am.

2

At the time of the kīrtana, with clasped hands,
I pray you : Be at my side.

3

Receive, O receive this promise
That I will not ask for anything else.

4

Tukārām's brother says :
O God, grant me this request.

Abhaṅg 3.

(Tuj pahātā sāmorī)[10]

1

When I see you in front of me,
My eyes refuse to look away.

2

My thoughts, O Lord of Paṇḍharī,
Embrace your feet.

3

As salt and water mixed,
We cannot be separated.

---

[9] *O* 1046.

[10] *IP* 3843.

4

Tukā says :

I put my life at your feet,
Like a sacrificed animal.

Abhanġ 4.

(Tumhī Sanakādika santa)[11]

1

O you Sanaka and the other saints,
You make people say that you are kind.

2

Grant me this favour,
Greet God on my behalf.

3

Beg for me the pity
of the Lord of Vaikuntha.

4

Tukā says :

Let him remember me,
Let him send to me quickly
his servants to fetch me.

Abhanġ 5.

(ātā tumhī kripāvanta)[12]

1

Now you holy Saints, my friends,
Have pity on me.

2

Do what is good for me.
My burden is on your shoulders.

3

It is true that till now
I have done nothing but deceive you.

4

Tukā says :

I have broken all these ties,
And I have embraced your feet.

---

[11] *O* 4108.

[12] *O* 4194.

Abhaṅg 6.

(Lēkurācē hita)[13]

1

A mother's only care
is the good of her children.

2

Such is the nature of compassion
An unselfish love.

3

She carries in her womb the burden of her children,
She endures everything from them.

4

Tukā says :
O Saints, my burden is on your shoulders.

Abhaṅg 7.

(Karuni ucita)[14]

1

Make me worthy of thy grace,
Lodge thy love in my heart.

2

Prompted by a great expectation,
I came to ask you for a gift.

3

When I am meditating on You,
Do not allow me to serve others.

4

Tukā's Brother says :
O God, put me in the charge of Faith.

Abhaṅg 8.

(Na karī udāsa)[15]

1

Do not remain indifferent towards me,
But fulfil my expectations.

---

[13] *O* 4167.

[14] *O* 1047.

[15] *O* 776.

2
Listen, listen O Nārāyaṇa,
Do not be deaf to my prayers.

3
You are my father, my mother, my family,
My kind-hearted relative.

4
Tukā says :
Who would take care of my interests
If you do not.

Abhaṅg 9.

(Garuḍāce pāyī)[16]

1
At the feet of Garuḍa
I put my head several times.

2
In order that He brings quickly
Harī to save me.

3
I pray with devotion Lakṣmi
whose hands embrace His feet.

4
Tukā says :
O Śeṣa, rouse Hṛṣīkeśa !

Abhaṅg 10.

(Yega yega Viṭhābāi)[17]

1
Come, come, Mother Viṭhā
My mother who dwells at Paṅḍharī.

2
With the Bhīmā and the Candrabhāgā,
The Gaṅgās of your feet.

3
O you come with them,
and dance in my round.

---

[16] *O* 771.

[17] *O* 1419.

4

Janī, Nāmdev's servant, says :
Your virtues have roused my passionate love.

When this Māḷikā is over, the pilgrims repeat for a little while the names "Rāmakriṣṇa Harī", and then begin to sing the second Māḷikā.[18] *This Māḷikā consists of twelve Abhaṅgs. In order,* and according to the numbers of the Indu-Prakāśa edition, they are : No. 2594, No. 2596, No. 2595, No. 2597, No. 2600, No. 2601, No. 2602, No. 2605, No. 2606, No. 2598, No. 2286. The translation of the first of them, written by Jñānadeva, is given as a specimen.

Abhaṅg 1.

(Yogiyā durlabha)[19]

1

I have seen this good God,
So difficult for the yogins to reach.

2

But, although I was gazing at Him unceasingly,
My hope was never satisfied.

3

I have seen, I have seen the God of the gods,
My doubts have been solved, duality has disappeared.

4

I have seen Him under his infinite forms and garbs,
What mark did you impress on me ?
Says Jñānadeva.

The third Māḷikā is called "Vāsudeva" because it is composed with Abhaṅgs of praise to Vāsudeva.[20] The number of these abhaṅgs is subordinate to the length of the morning road. The more usual are : the abhaṅg "bābā mamatā niśī ahaṁkāra dāṭa" of Jñānadeva,[21] the abhaṅg "ghuḷaghuḷā vājatī ṭāḷ" of Jñānadeva,[22] the abhaṅg "bābā ahaṁkāra niśī ghanadāṭa" of Nāmdev,[23] the abhaṅg "mī Vāsudeva nāmē phoditō nitya ṭāho" of Eknāth,[24] the abhaṅg "sukha duḥkha samāna sakaḷa" of the same writer, and the abhaṅg "Rāmakrisṇa gītī gāta" of Tukārām.[25] This Māḷikā always ends by the abhaṅg called 'jogī', "jaga jogī jaga jogī" of Tukārām.[26]

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[18] *Bhajani Māḷikā*, p. 8.

[19] *O* 1813.

[20] PATHAK, B. L. *Vārkarī Bhajanamālā*, pp. 14 ff.

[21] *O* 4480.

[22] *O* 4481.

[23] *O* 4472.

[24] *O* 4478.

The fourth māḷikā is called "āṅdhaḷe paṅguḷa",[27] or the songs of the blind and the cripple. They all picture the pilgrim as a blind or a cripple begging God to be relieved of his infirmities. The following abhaṅg written by Tukārām is a good example of these symbolical poems:

(Pāṅguḷa jhālō devā)[28]

1

I am a cripple, O God,
I have neither hands nor feet.
I am seated on a rebellious mount;
If I spur it, it will not see fences,
hedges, stumps of trees or holes.
I have none to help me, neither father, nor mother.
O you who are going to Paṇḍharpūr,
Grant me this favour, convey me there,
O friends of the destitute.

2

Wandering from door to door on my crutches,
I am worn out.
I found no benefactor to relieve me from the curse
of my birth.
Let Hari manifest to me that fame which the Saints extol:
He gives feet to the legless,
He who dwells at Paṇḍharpūr.

3

For the sake of my stomach, I am dependent on all.
I receive no alms in spite of my crying
"mother, father" !
One says "Get out!". They have no pity.
Dogs hunt me: many fierce desires possess me.

4

I don't know what faults I have committed in my
past life,
I cannot remember my good and bad deeds,

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[25] *O* 4468.
[26] *IP* 3980.
[27] PATHAK, pp. 24 ff.
[28] *IP* 423.

I have lost all my wits, like a moth
fluttering round a lamp.
Somehow give me the gift of life
O you great Saints

5

I came from far and am utterly destitute:
This is the reason why I came here:
It is hard to find you but I got the sight of your feet.
O Saints, Tukā folds his hands and prays to you.

The fifth and last Māḷikā is sung when the pālkhī is in sight of the village where the morning halt is to be made. It is called "gauḷṇī"[29] or the wives and daughters of the herdsmen, and consists of abhaṅgs, chiefly of Tukārām and Niḷobā, in praise of Kṛṣṇa playing with the gopīs at Gokula. The more frequent of these abhaṅgs are:

"Bharilā ulaṇḍūṇī ritā karī ghaṭa" of Tukārām,[30]
"Paḍilī bhūlī dhāvate sairāṭa" of Tukārām,[31]
"Gāī-gopāḷa yamunāce taṭī' of Tukārām.[32]
"Ekī ekaṭācī asonī ekalā" of Niḷobā.[33]
"Hotē bahuta divasa ārta vāgavīlē of Niḷobā.[34]

Then the pālkhī stops, and the pilgrims leave the road to rest a while and prepare their meal.

The "office" of the afternoon begins with the following abhaṅg:

Abhaṅg 1
(Sundar tē dhyāna)[35]

How beautiful is the image of the god
standing on a brick, his hands on his hips.

2

I shall always love this image,
a garland of Tulsī-beads round its neck
and a silk 'dhoti' round its loins

3

On its ears the fish-shaped pendant shines,
And on its breast the jewel Kaustubha.

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[29] Pathak, pp. 32 ff.
[30] *IP* 379.
[31] *IP* 385.
[32] *IP* 396.
[33] *O* 3669.
[34] *O* 3685.
[35] *O* 1.

4
Tukā says:
All my joy is in this image,
I am gazing with love at its beautiful face.

Then comes the singing of the "Haripāṭha" of Jñānadeva.[36] It consists of twenty-seven abhaṅgs consecrated to the praises of Hari, and of a very highly philosophical content. We give the translation of the first three of them:

Haripāṭha

Abhaṅg 1

1
He has obtained the four liberations,[37]
He who stands at the door of God.

2
Let your mouth pronounce 'Hari',
Who could then measure your merit?

3
As long as you are in the Saṁsāra,
Make haste to train your tongue
Say the Vedas and the Śastras at the top of your voice.

4
Jñānadeva says:
Although the Pāṇḍavas were in their house
The king of Dwāraka was with them,
according to Vyāsa.

Abhaṅg 2

(Cahū vedī jāṇa)

Be aware that the four Vedas,
The six Śāstras and the eighteen Purāṇas
Sing the praises of Hari.

2
As you get hold of the butter after the churning,
Thus get hold of the Infinite,
And drop the vain talks and the useless paths.

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[36] JOSHI, V. N. *Jñâneśvarâcâ Sârtha Haripâṭha.*
[37] These four liberations are : *Salokatâ, Samîpatâ, Sarûpatâ* and *Sâyujya.*

3

Hari alone is the universal Soul,
As well as the conditioned soul.
Thus, don't mislead your mind in useless arguments.

4

Jñānadeva says:

Hari is in Vaikuntha,
Hari can be seen everywhere.

Abhaṅg 3

(Triguṇa asāra)

1

What possesses the three qualities[38] is unreal,
What is devoid of quality is real.
If you want to understand what is real and unreal,
recite the praises of Hari.

2

What is with qualities is Saguṇa, and what is
without quality is Nirguṇa:
But without Hari these distinctions are vain.

3

What is without form is invisible, and what is
with form is visble.
All that moves or is still comes from that:
Sing the praises of Hari.

4

Jñānadeva says:

Due to the merits of my previous births,
Rāmakṛṣṇa, the Eternal, dwells in my mind and in
in my thoughts.

When the pilgrims have sung the twenty-seventh abhaṅg, the diṇḍī stops and the pilgrims spread in two lines on either side of the road facing the pālkhī, singing the refrain:
"Jñānadeva pramāṇa nivṛttidevī jñāna, samādhī sañjīvana haripāṭha". They then turn round and bow to the pādukās and start walking again singing the last abhaṅg of the "Haripāṭha", followed by the first. During

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[38] These three qualities are : *Sattva, Rajas, Tamas.*

the singing of the Haripāṭha, the refrain "Hari mukhē mhaṇā, Hari mukhē mhaṇā, puṇyācī gaṇanā koṇ karī," is repeated at the end of each abhaṅg.

When the signing of the Haripāṭha' is over, the 'Guruparaṁparā' is sung.[39] It consists of abhaṅgs giving the spiritual genealogy of Jñāndeva and Tukārām and singing the praises of their gurus. The 'Guruparaṁparā' is followed by the abhaṅg "avaghāci saṁsāra sukhācā karīna" of Jñānadeva.[40] Then according to the length of the road still to be done, some abhaṅgs may be added which are chosen according to the day of the week.

When the procession arrives in sight of the town or village where the pilgrims are to stay the night, the last Mālikā called "Santastutī",[41] is sung. It consists of abhaṅgs composed by Tukārām in the honour of the saints. One of them "O you kind and compassionate Santas..." has been translated at the beginning of this chapter. Then, when all the pilgrims are gathered in front of the big tent, the refrain "Jñānbā Tukārām" is repeated again and again in a rhythm growing faster and faster until the pālkhī is placed in front of the tent. Then an āratī is performed while the abhaṅg "Sahasradīpē dīpa kaiśī prakāśalī prabhā" of Eknāth[42] or any other āraṭī is sung. This ends the evening "office".

Thus singing, the pilgrims prepare their mind and their heart for the meeting with God that is symbolised in the 'darśan' of Viṭhobā. Besides the visit to the great temple, the pilgrims if they are so minded, may perform the whole cycle of ceremonies that are usual when one makes a pilgrimage to a holy place. But in fact this ritual is not connected as such with the pilgrimage. Still, a few pilgrims will ask a baḍvā to act as his guide for the exact performance of all the rites. This office of the baḍvās is one of the main sources of their income, and they keep register where the names of their clients are written. They have in that way a kind of claim over any member of the families whose name is recorded in their books, and in order to assert their rights, they will be on the lookout on the roads or at the railway station so as not to miss any of their prospective clients.

The baḍvā takes charge of his pilgrim, he will not only guide him in the intricacies of the various rites, and manage to obtain for him the 'darśan' of Viṭhobā, but he will also give him lodging and food.

The various rites may be divided into eight groups : (1) the Gaṅgābheṭa, (2) the Godāna, (3) the Śrāddha, (4) the Mahāpujā, (5) the Pādyapujā, (6) Rakhumāi darśana, (7) the Devabrāhmaṇa, (8) the Pradakṣiṇā.

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[39] PATHAK, pp. 52 ff.

[40] *O* 2504.

[41] JOG, V. R. *Bhajanī Mālikā*, pp. 20 ff.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

The first ceremony called Gaṅgābheṭa or meeting the river, is a rite of purification. It is the first duty of a pilgrim coming to Paṇḍharpur, to clean himself. On the way, he sang this purifying property of the waters of the Bhīmā, and after the dust and sweating of the long way it is not a superfluous service.

Clad in his ordinary dress and accompanied by his family, the pilgrims go to one of the ghāṭs together with the baḍvā. When they arrive, all the male members of the family undress, keeping only their loin-cloth, and stand in a row along the bank of the river. The priest gives to each of them a coconut which they take with both hands and lay in front of them. Sandal-paste, a few grains of rice, and Tulsī leaves are laid near the cocoanut. Each pilgrim makes then his offering to the river. Then he enters into the water to about the waist and he dips himself till the water covers him except the face and head. He then asks the baḍvā : "May I bathe" and the priest replies "May you bathe well". He then dives into the water and bathes.

If the pilgrim is a Brahmin he performs the usual ritual bath accompanied by the rubbing of some mud from the river bed, and a little cowdung on his body. The pilgrim then leaves the water and dresses himself in dry clothes, giving to the baḍvā the clothing worn while bathing.

The second ceremony consists of various offerings, namely the offering of the cow or 'godāna' and the offering of the 'śāḷigrāma', which are not in any way peculiar to Paṇḍharpūr. The godāna' should consists in giving a real cow, but as few are rich enough to afford such an expense, the baḍvā usually supplies the pilgrim with a cow and its calf which he lends him for the moment. First the cow is worshipped, and four silver hoofs are touched against the cow's hoofs and two small gold horns against her horns and are all laid before her. A small copper saddle is set on her back and a bell is tied round her neck. Some 'jowārī' is laid before her which she at once eats.

The pilgrim then goes thrice round the cow; after the last turn he takes the end of her tail in his right hand, and putting some money along with it, pours water over the money and the tail-end into the right palm of the baḍvā while reciting a formula of offering. The baḍvā lets go the tail, sprinkles the water on the pilgrim's head, utters a blessing and collects the money.

The offering of the 'śāḷigrāma' is made by the Kuṇbīs, Telangīs and pilgrims from Goa. The pilgrim brings the 'śāḷigrāma', a smooth quartz pebble, a gold 'Tulsī' leaf, a small brass boy, a conch shell, a bell and a copper-plate. He sets the 'śāḷigrāma' on the copper-plate and offers to it sandal-paste, rice, 'Tulsī' leaves, and waves lights before it.

Then a few rice-grains are sprinkled over the baḍvā's head, sandal-paste is rubbed on his brow, and a few flowers, a betelnut and a copper are dropped in his palm. A prayer is repeated and the pilgrim hands the 'śāḷigrāma' to the baḍvā with some money.

The next ceremony, the 'śraddha' is done in memory of the pilgrim's ancestors, namely, his father, his grand-father and his great-grand-father for it is believed that the deceased person gets his new birth only after the third generation of his descendants. As the Bhīmā does not flow straight into the sea, Paṇḍharpūr is less famous for the 'śrāddha' ceremony than Nāsik, Allāhābād or Dwārakā. The Brahmins who perform it at Paṇḍharpūr do not shave their moustaches. This rite is performed at the Viṣṇupada temple. Rice balls or 'piṇḍa' are laid before the foot-prints of Viṣṇu and the names of the deceased ancestors are uttered; then the balls are removed, the foot-prints washed, sandal water and sesamum grains laid before them.

Then the pujārī gives the 'prasāda' to the pilgrim chiefly fruits or sugar. He pats the pilgrim on his back and says: "Thy ancestors have gone to heaven". The non-brahmins offer balls of wheat-flour, molasses or barley.

The next ceremony and the more important is the Mahā-pujā performed in the temple of Viṭhobā. The other rites are merely a preparation and purification for this one. The pilgrim, to show his devotion towards Viṭhobā, may offer him the great pujā, or pujā of the five nectars pañcāmṛtapujā). After bathing, the pilgrim, clad in a silk dhoti, enters the temple accompanied by the baḍvā and sits in the four-pillar chamber. He first worships a betelnut set in rice in a leaf cup, which symbolises Gaṇapati. Then he touches the floor with his hand and worships the earth. He then worships with the usual offerings a silver vessel full of water, a conch-shell and the bell of the temple.

The pilgrim goes then into the inner-chamber and the clothes of the image are taken off. The baḍvā points out some marks on its back which were made by the bundle of cakes which Kṛṣṇa carried on his back when tending cattle, and also a hollow on his chest which was caused by a brahmin's kick.

The image is then bathed in water first, and then with the five nectars, as described in the third chapter. If the pilgrim is rich enough, he is allowed to pour with his hand the liquids over the image and to rub it with ghee, honey and sugar. During the ceremony, hymns are sung by the 'benārī'.

The pilgrim then lays before the image sandal, flowers, incense and money. If he makes presents of clothes or ornaments, they are put on the image. Garlands are thrown round its neck, an 'āratī' is performed, and the pilgrim makes a last offering of food and money which go to the baḍvā. This rite may be performed at any time in the morning between the Kākaḍāratī and the Madhyāhnapujā.

The 'pādyapujā' is a simpler substitute for the Mahāpujā. It consists in washing the feet of the image, wiping them dry, sprinkling them with sandal-paste and rice, throwing garlands round its neck, waving lighted incense sticks and camphor and offering food and money.

Afterwards the pilgrim pays his devotions to Rakhumāī by performing in her temple a Mahāpujā of the same kind as the one above described.

The next ceremony a pilgrim may perform at Paṇḍharpūr is the 'devabrāhmaṇa', i.e. the offering of a meal to brahmins, said to be a very meritorious act. The baḍvā who has taken the pilgrim in charge prepares the meal in his own house and invites as many brahmins as his client can afford. On that day the pilgrim eats only after brahmins have eaten. The lowest number of brahmins fed is two, that is one man and one woman, but as many as fifty to a hundred are generally fed. If the pilgrim is a brahmin, he partakes of the meal with his guests.

Finally, the pilgrim will not leave Paṇḍharpūr without having visited the various temples and holy spots in the town. This is done according to a traditional way called 'pradakṣiṇā'. These are of two kinds, the small pradakṣiṇā or 'devapradakṣiṇā' and the big pra- 'nagarpradakṣīṇā'. dakṣīṇā called .The first one consists in visiting the various temples situated on the pradakṣiṇā street, which makes a complete circle round the temple of Viṭhobā. The pilgrim starts from the Mahādvāra ghāṭ, then proceeds to the Puṇḍalīka temple, and visits the temples of Dattātraya, Kālā Mārutī, Kṛṣṇājibāva, Copālā. He then completes the circuit at the Uddhava ghāṭ. Each time he crosses one of the four points of the compass with regard to the great temple, he must turn round once.

The circuit round the town or 'nagarapradakṣīṇā' is much longer. The pilgrim enters the river at the Mahādvār ghāṭ, visits Puṇḍalīka's temple, proceeds along the river or on board a small boat to the Viṣṇupada temple. He then visits the temples of Nārada, Anantapūr Mahādeva, Gopāḷpūr, Padmāvatī, Vyasa, Lakhubāi, Ambābāi and returns to the Mahādvāra ghāṭ.

All these ceremonies can be performed only when the crowd of pilgrims is not too big. At the time of the great pilgrimages the pilgrims can only get the 'darśana' of the god and that for a few seconds. And anyhow, Vārkarīs are not keen on performing the various rites described above. They will, however, not leave Paṇḍharpūr without having bathed in the Bhīma, and got "darśana" in the Viṭhoba's 'Puṇḍalīka's and Gopāḷpūr temples. Special fences are built inside the temple to canalise the flow of the devotees which never abates day and night for several days.

After this description of the pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr, and of various activities connected with it, it remains to be seen what is the purpose of it, its general atmosphere and its significance.

To go every year on pilgrimage is indeed for the Vārkarī an obligation: but this obligation should not be considered as an external rule, the breaking of which would be penalised by any sanction. The Vārkarī is obliged to go on pilgrimage because if he did not he would not be a Vārkarī. He became a member of the panth in order to go on pilgrimage, since it is the pilgrimage that makes the Vārkarī. It is therefore the fulfilment of a vow taken freely by the member of the panth. This obligation is therefore not to be compared with God's commandments, or the Church's commandments in the Catholic religion, but rather with the religious vow taken in religious orders. The Vārkarī is a religion within the Hindu dharma, and his special vow is to go on pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr.

The Vārkarī on his way to Paṇḍharpūr has not the psychology of one who would abide by a rule but of one who fulfils an essential and well-loved promise. It is why there is no sanction for the Vārkarī who would not perform his annual pilgrimages, and it could not be otherwise. The problem does not even arise: the Vārkarī is too keen on his pilgrimages to miss any of them of his own free will: and it is a proverb amongst Vārkarīs that if one of them is not seen at the pilgrimage, he must be dead or dying.

This characteristic of a freely-taken engagement gives to the pilgrimage a remarkable quality of spontaneousness. It is with all the joy of his heart that the Vārkarī takes part in it. This spontaneity is not hampered by a stiff frame: although there is a definite organisation, it is meant more to canalise the enthusiastic participation of the pilgrims than to impose a totalitarian rule on them. For instance there is no hierarchy among the members of the procession. The pilgrimage has no director: there is no distinction between priests, officiants, clerks and faithfuls: all the pilgrims are on the same level, and if there is an authority it is not due to any office, but to the spiritual personality of some of the pilgrims acknowledged as 'guru' by his followers.

The same freedom is found in the singing which lasts as long as the pilgrimage itself. There is, as we have seen, a general programme of the various hymns to be sung, but it includes many possibilities of choice left to the inspiration of the leader of each 'diṇḍī'. There is no official choir-master in the diṇḍīs but each of the better singers in their turn takes the lead in the singing and those with the best memory begin the suitable abhaṅg. When one of the leading singers is tired, another one relieves him on a common and spontaneous understanding. The joy of singing shines on all the smiling faces and from time to time the pilgrims glance at their neighbours with happy blinkings and noddlings. This joy is apparent on the face of the soloist who at the appropriate time starts an elaborate musical variation on the coda of some of the abhaṅgs, and it reaches its peak during those dancing interludes that mark the transition between one 'mālikā' and the other. Then the rhythm quickens at the accompaniment of the ṭāḷs and 'mṛdaṅgas, to come to a sudden stop when its speed would become frantic.

All the pilgrims take part in this singing and their joy is the joy of a community. This leads us to stress on another characteristic of the pilgrimage, its social aspect. It is not the solitary pilgrimage of the kind performed by innumerable 'sādhus' and 'gosāvīs' commonly met on any of the Indan roads, nor the frantic rush of devotees pulling the cart of their god as is often seen in other holy places, it is the peaceful if enthusiastic pilgrimage of a number of small groups united by familial or social ties and that are in existence the whole year round. The Vārkarīs are not professional pilgrims, they are ordinary men-of-the world. The 'diṇḍī' is really the basic unity of the procession, an organic cell in the body, and its members are united together not artificially and for the short time of the pilgrimage only, but organically and for life. It is the practical aspect of this "community of Saints" which is so important a characteristic of the Vārkarīs. The pilgrim goes on pilgrimage to benefit by the constant presence and the teachings of his 'guru'. He finds in this daily and familiar contact a new impetus for his spiritual life because he can compare himself with the example of his master whom he can "see, listen to and touch with his own hand".

This organisation by 'diṇḍīs' offers therefore a golden opportunity to the guru for preaching by his own example and for training his disciples; but it has also some dangers. The diṇḍīs may become a small closed "chapel" exclusive in its membership and esoteric in its doctrine, which could split the unity of the procession. It is a real danger because these groups consist of people of the same caste and one knows the frequent isolationist tendency of the various castes in India. The teaching of the Saints on that subject is clear. Viṭhobā does not make a difference between castes: within the limits of Paṇḍharpūr there is no distinction between castes: anybody, whatever his caste, may reach mokṣa' through the royal path of 'bhakti'. Is not the diṇḍī' system contradictory to this ideal of the Saints and how is this ideal practically realised in the pilgrimage?

On the level of the Pālkhī one can say that this ideal is realised and it is a characteristic seldom found in other religious sects in India. The pālkhī is composed of members of all castes, Brahmins, Marāṭhas, Craftsmen, Kuṇbīs and even Mahārs. But one point must be made clear at the same time. The members of the various castes are not mixed together but the members of each 'diṇḍī' belong to one caste only. However, this is not in opposition to the ideal above mentioned: it is on the contrary a solution of the problem of the distinction of castes and of their life together. The idea of a group composed of individuals coming from various castes with different cultures, traditions and customs could only be an artificial juxtaposition and not a true community: this idea can exist only in the minds of idealists who have lost contact with human and social reality. The Vārkarī solution is a happy compromise between the reality of the distinction between castes and the ideal of a social community to unite them.

One must indeed confess that this solution is efficient. The various 'diṇḍīs' which represent different communities do coexist in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and tolerance. A brahmin will not hesitate in helping a mahār in need. All the pilgrims without distinction of caste will gather together in the evening round the pālkhī or at night to listen to the leader of Kīrtan or Bhajan. The hardships of the way contribute to bind the various diṇḍīs together and the good-will of all prevents hurts and spares the feelings. Slowly but truly a pālkhī-consciousness grows through the willingness and kindness of all.

However the danger remains and there is in spite of all a real partitioning between the 'diṇḍīs'. This is shown by the very rare human contact between them: each 'diṇḍī' takes its meal separately from the others: this is partly explained by the differences of diet in the various castes and also by the difficulties of getting the proper food due to rationing. But partaking of a meal is one of the tests by which caste distinction reveals itself openly. In the same way during the halts the pilgrims gather round a tree or near a well to rest and talk: it is very rare to see people of different 'dīṇḍis' together.

It is true that the Vārkarīs show a spirit of tolerance towards the other castes, and we can add towards other creeds and races as we have had the pleasure to experiment personally. Nevertheless this panth does not seem to be a progressive element towards the lowering down of the fences between castes. They have found a compromise, they have not taken a step forward. As a matter of fact it even happens that a certain rivalry arises between the 'dīṇḍis', mounting sometimes to hostility. The recent decision to have a board of organisers is mostly due to the hope that it will be able to settle all possible disputes and difficulties between the 'dīṇḍis', especially the question of their place in the procession, all wishing to be as near the pālkhī as possible.

The other danger of this pālkhī-consciousness which has on the other hand many good qualities, is to weaken or even to eliminate individualities. We ave said that the diṇḍī is the unity of the 'pālkhī'. This may be so at the cost of the individual. This is most striking in the case of the prayers: The prayer chiefly consists in the singing of the hymns and as such is a common prayer: but one seldom feels that it is accompanied by inward individual recollection. Besides, the calm and the silence required for individual meditation is difficult to be found during the pilgrimage. The constant singing combined with the unceasing beating of the drums and cymbals create a psychological state in which personal consciousness is lost. The pilgrim is gripped in a powerful motion where his individuality disappears.[43]

We have noted that the choice of the abhaṅgs was sometimes left to the inspiration of the singers: their choice however is limited, and on the other hand the greatest part of the abhaṅgs are repeated every day: thus the singing becomes mechanical, the words lose their meanings, their expression of a personal prayer, of an individual aspiration towards God. It is true that the pilgrimage is a public manifestation of devotion and as such it is necessary that a common stock of traditional prayers should exist: every religion has a hymn-book under one form or another. It is also true that the needs of a spiritual life are the same throughout the history of mankind and that the teachings of the great spiritual masters of the past ages are still valuable and indeed irreplaceable. But any progress in spiritual life presupposes a personal effort that a common prayer however useful it may be, can never replace. Besides prayer must be in keeping with the context of the daily life of the devotee, and correspond to needs conditioned by his culture and social environment. The danger of the prayer during the pilgrimage is not that it be common, but that it is only common.

The quiet required for personal meditation is further hampered by another character of the pilgrimage which is at the same time one of its best features, we mean its popular aspect. The Vārkarī 'saṁpradāya' is not an esoteric movement, but it derives its roots in the devotion of the humble people of the towns and villages of Mahārāṣṭra. The pilgrimage, which is the display of the spiritual joy of the Vārkarī, is also a manifestation of the popular joy which expresses itself noisily if unsophistically. It is that popular joy which is the reason for the 'rangaṇs' which from time to time interrupts the progress of the procession. This performance is an expression of the popular need for "circenses" as well as of the veneration of the Marāṭha people for the horse: it is a remembrance of the great equestrian tradition of a race of horsemen. There, popular joy can let itself go, sometimes somewhat roughly as in the last raṅgaṇ held before reaching Wākhrī.

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[43] This psychological effect however is a sort of help to persons who find it difficult to meditate. It makes forget their mundane desires and worries, and prepares them for a purer love of God.

However, these performances are only a side-show of the pilgrimage and an additional proof that the Vārkarī movement is popular. The pilgrimage is popular in more than one way. It is a social event in the life of the country, a festive date in the calendar of the villagers. The various pālkhīs, far from only using the main roads, very often take to side-roads or even footpaths. In that way they pass through villages which are not situated on the main lines of communications. For all these villages the coming of the pālkhī is a great event, looked forward to and prepared: in many places the villagers adorn their houses and their streets. Hawkers and pedlars take care to come in advance so that in all the places where the pālkhī stops it is a real fair which is waiting for it. Besides, villagers have the duty which is considered by them as an honour to lodge and feed the pilgrims and that gives them ample opportunities to come into contact with them and to become members of the "community of the saints."

Then, every night the procession stops in a more important village or in a small town where always a big crowd is waiting for its coming. As throughout the night the 'diṇḍīs' in turn have the duty to take charge of the Bhajans and Kīrtans, the people gather eagerly round them to listen to the 'kathās' and to the singing, and the Vārkarī tradition is precisely to adapt its methods of moral and spiritual teaching to the cultural level of the simple people. Since Jñānadeva up to this day the golden rule of the Vārkarī 'kīrtankār' is to be understood by all. It needs to have been the personal witness of these night 'kīrtans' to realise the mastery of the preachers in putting in a simple and moving language the great truths of their creed. The constant use of familiar images and striking comparisons, the many allusions to popular legends and traditions are the sure way to instil easily and deeply in the minds of their listeners the teachings of the great Saints of the past. The audience gives to these performance an eager and religious attention excited from time to time by the singing of some abhaṅgs known by all and in which all gladly take part. The 'kīrtan' is indeed a method of popular preaching of great psychological value.

To return to the pilgrim himself, the pilgrimage has another part to play in his spiritual progress. The general tendency of the Vārkarī 'saṁpradāya' is towards the Bhakti way of getting 'mokṣa', specifically by the devotional love for Viṭhobā. But it would be wrong to imagine that this love is a sweet "quietism". On the contrary it presupposes a real asceticism in which the pilgrimage is an important element. Undoubtedly the spiritual writers of the panth are not much in favour of yogic methods or of those spectacular mortifications indulged in by the 'Bairāgīs' and other wandering 'sādhus'. Nevertheless the 'Bhakti mārga' includes methods of purification none the less necessary. Besides, as the 'mokṣa' promised by the Bhakti is open to all, its method of purification is possible for all and not restricted to the fortunate few who are able to leave the world and isolate themselves in forests or deserted places. It first requires the strict observance of all the rules of the Hindu Dharma and the keeping away from all food except vegetarian. It is on this background that the Vārkarī method is the pilgrimage.

Looked upon under this aspect, the pilgrimage must be considered as a real 'tapa'. A special line of mortification will give to the Vārkarī the opportunity to exercise the virtues required for getting at the perfect 'bhakti'. This special kind of tapas consists of all the hardships of the way. To take periodically to the road, to break with the thousand and one small amenities of their homes, to adopt in their place the privations and the fatigue of the road is in itself a mortification. This annual exercise of detachment which becomes harder with age, helps the pilgrims in keeping alive a spirit of indifference towards all worldly possessions which is the first condition for an authentic spiritual life. They must eat what is prepared, and due to the precarious conditions of an open air kitchen it is not always a perfect cooking. Sometimes he must sleep on an empty stomach when the rains do not permit the kindling of the fires. He must sleep in uncomfortable places, sometimes in the open, sometimes, if it is raining, squatting in a barn or in the hall of a temple, squeezed between crowds of people in the same predicament, and spend the night wet through and frozen. As for his bath, suitable rivers or wells are not always available and this is pecularly hard on the brahmins whose rules for cleanliness are specially strict. He must walk throughout the day under the scorching sun or the driving rain, on a road covered with a penetrating dust that the feet of the pilgrims transforms into thick clouds or into a river of mud if it happens to be raining. He must endure all this and in spite of it keep his smile and good temper and enthusiasm and forget it, in taking part in the praying and the singing of his 'diṇḍī'.

We mentioned the sanctifying power attributed to the road going to Paṇḍharpūr: it is sanctifying chiefly because it is mortifying. It is by doing it year after year that Vārkarī Saints are made. This asceticism is not extravagant but sane and harmonious: it is one of the qualities of the road to make of the walker a calm and well-balanced being. This balance which characterises the pilgrimage of Paṇḍharpūr differentiates it also from other pilgrimages in India.

The organisation of the pilgrimage is not left to improvisation. The date is automatically fixed by the Hindu calendar and the date of the starting of the different pālkhīs as well as those of their passage through each village is known beforehand in this annual function of the Āṣādhī ekādaśī. A long practice gives to the time-table enough adaptability to cope with any unexpected obstacle and yet arrive at the appointed time: the determination of the pilgrims makes it possible to keep to the time-table. As the date of the coming of the procession is known by the villagers, everything is made ready in time, and the required supply of food is available: the water places are known and even their capacity, as the pilgrimage passes through the same places at the same time every year.

This organisation finds its strength in its old tradition, but the organisers are not afraid of modern improvements. In his article on the pilgrimage in the 'Ravivār Sakāḷ' of the 22nd of July 1951, Mr. Neurgaonkar suggested new improvements; some of them were carried out for the pilgrimage of 1952. He suggested that the villagers should plant trees along the road so that the pilgrims would be more protected against the sun, that the organisers of the pilgrimage should purchase several tank-wagons to supply drinkable water and even an electric set to produce its own electricity. All these improvements cannot deprive the pilgrimage of his character of mortification but will ameliorate its hygiene. An important step was already taken by making the inoculation against cholera compulsory for every pilgrim. This has practically stopped the epidemic which formerly was the usual sequel of the great pilgrimage.

Thus the pilgrimage has two main functions: It is a religious activity essential in the formation of a Vārkarī and at the same time a powerful way of spreading the panth and of promoting the religious education of the people. Of these two functions, the first is the more important. The pilgrimage is a walking retreat of a fortnight or more during which the Vārkarī has the opportunity of keeping alive his religious fervor and of progressing in spiritual life. It perpetuates the life of the panth and gives it its legitimate popularity.

CHAPTER V

THE SPIRIT OF THE VĀRKARĪS

In the previous chapters we have described the Vārkarīs as they appear in their history and through their public manifestations. It remains to see now what is the driving spirit of this religious movement and what are its distinguishing characteristics as compared with other sects. It would be outside our purpose to give an exhaustive description of their philosophical tenets. Such a work has been done in many Marāṭhī publications. The main inspiration of their writing is taken from the two great Bhakti works, "The Bhagavadgītā" and "The Bhāgvata Purāṇa". However, they have also a special leaning towards the philosophical system of Śankara, although sometimes, as in the case of the conception of "Māyā" they have a special interpretation of this philosophy. Their teaching is a harmonious synthesis of these various traditions, and indeed it could be said that the Bhakti they preached is really the essence of all the religious ideas that have been advocated through many centuries before their foundations. Their philosophical principles are not what constitute their originality. Our intention is to describe their main attitudes towards things in general and in spiritual matters in particular.

The Mānbhāvas and the Nāthas are the two sects which sprung up in Mahārāṣṭra about the same time as the Vārkarīs, and continued to exist up to the present day, although they are not purely Mahārāṣṭrian any more. The Mānbhāvas were very popular at the time of Jñānadeva and especially in the country where the Vārkarī Saint spent his childhood. They therefore may have influenced the father of the Vārkarī panth, but in subsequent times a bitter opposition arose between the two sects. The Nāthas are still more directly connected with the origin of the Vārkarīs, as the brother and 'guru' of Jñānadeva, Nivṛttināth, was, as can be seen from his name, a member of this school of 'Yoga'. It will thererefore be interesting to see whether in his main attitudes towards religious things the Vārkarī has been influenced by these sects or not.

What is the attitude of the Vārkarī towards God? All the saints called God the Unknowable: God cannot be perceived by the senses nor understood by the mind in his entirety, and the usual term used to name God considered under this aspect is 'Parabrahma'. This notion of God is made clear already in the Jñāneśvarī and in the Amṛtānubhava.

In the former it is said: "As the foetus in the womb cannot know the age of its mother....as the sea-animals cannot measure the greatness of the sea, as the fly cannot cross the heaven,....similarly the sages and the gods and all the beings on the earth being born of Me, cannot know me." (X. 65-69). And in the Amṛtānubhava: "It is impossible for anyone to see the Brahman, which, being pure knowledge itself, cannot be an object of knowledge even to itself, just as the tongue that tastes all other things cannot taste itself." (VII.113).

We find this idea of the absolute transcendence of God not only in these philosophical works, but in many abhaṅgs as well. 'Vedāsī agocar parabrahma," "O God, whom the Vedas cannot understand," says Nāmdev[1] : "Vedāsi kānaḍē, śṛutīsī kānaḍē Parabrahma." "O Parabrahma unintelligible for the Vedas and the Srutī" says he in another abhaṅga,[2] according to Bhānudās, parabrahma is "Veda maun paḍe śrutīsī sākaḍē varṇita kuvāḍē pūranāsī", "puzzling for the Pūrāṇas, embarrassing for the Śruti compelling the Vedas to be silent."[3]

But if God is the absolute Transcendent, how is 'mokṣa' possible? The Vārkarī spirituality is essentially a spirituality centred on the idea of liberation or 'mokṣa'. The devotee intends to escape the cycles of rebirths and he can do so only in going beyond the realm of the 'sattva', 'rajas' and 'tamas' qualities and reaching identity with God. But how can he reach God if He is beyond all knowledge, far away from human reach? If the world was Māyā it needs only to discard its spell to reach God: but the Varkarī does not believe the world to be mere illusion: the world is real even if it is of the poorest reality. The world is the surface of God, explains the Vārkarī who likes to compare the world to the moving waves of the sea: the sea is still but on its surface the waves are moving: in the same way God is eternally still and beyond our perception, but the world is its moving manifestation although this motion hides the true nature of God. Man lost among this motion is in God but cannot see Him.

The tragic part of this situation is that there is no way out for man. All the so-called 'mārgas' are vain. The Jñāneśvarī says: "Those who are dependant upon their own intellects, try to swim over this flood (of the world) and no trace of them remains. Those who are given to over self-consciousness sink in the abyss of pride. Those who try to cross this flood by means of the knowledge of the Vedas, hug to their heart huge pieces of stone, and disappear into yawning arrogance. Those who clasp to their breast sacrifice go only into the recess of heaven, where no boat of dispassionateness is available, where no raft of discrimination is to be found ....". In these words of the Jñāneśvarī one can see the futility of trying to get 'mokṣa' by the way of knowledge, (jñāna) or of asceticism (yoga) or of ritualistic observance, or even of trust in the Vedas.

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[1] *O* 19. [2] *O* 24. [3] *O* 1735.

Tukārām expresses exactly the same idea in several abhaṅgs: "Some pride themselves in pilgrimages or austerities: they glory in a thing unreal." "The learned in the Vedas, the eloquent do not agree with each other. I went to see what faith was in them who worship the Self within them, there I found their behaviour false to their professions. Ascetics and guides give way to wrath, they are not at peace within themselves." "The recitation of the Vedas is a waste of time." "You have made yourself a learned man, and you read the 'Purāṇas;' but you do not know who you are." "He wears the ochre robe, but he is a dog by nature; what path of spiritual experience has he followed?"

But if man cannot reach God by his own effort, or know Him adequately, he may ask him to be known and reached. The only adequate way to obtain 'mokṣa' is the 'bhakti'. At the end of the passage of the Jñāneśvarī quoted above where the uselessness of all the other means of liberation is described, it is said: "It is only those who are full of devotion to me, for whom the guru acts as a pilot and who take the raft of self-realisation for such we may say that the flood ceases to exist." Tukārām says that only faith in God can save man: "Not by guise can God be attained nor by ceremonies that please our fancy. Sweep away all this nonsense, this veil that is hung before our eyes. Without pure faith, whatever we do is done in vain."

In this doctrine, the Vārkarīs agree with the Mānbhāvas and are in opposition with the Nāthas. According to the latter austerities and asceticism which give the soul absolute power over the body were sufficient to reach final liberation. The famous victory of Jñānadeva over the yogin Cāṅgdeva illustrates the Vārkarī position on that question. However the Vārkarīs do not condemn such a method absolutely: they only stress its limitations. Austerities and yogic practices are not bad as such, but they are only a preparation for devotion, a purificatoin of the soul to receive the grace of God. Man may indulge in them, provided he does not stake everything on them and take pride of his achievements. They are however not necessary to attain a perfect bhakti. The Vārkarīs have always in mind to give to everybody the possibility of obtaining 'mokṣa', and obviously yogic practices are reserved to a few 'sannyāsīs'. An ordinary man in the midst of his occupations cannot afford to practise them. So although not condemning them, the Vārkarīs give their preferences to other forms of mortification such as the pilgrimage, as we have seen in the last chapter. The Mānbhāvas on the contrary reject such practices not only because according to them they are useless, but because they are an obstacle to salvation. They are the lures into which some deities try to deceive mankind and divert it from its true goal.

The only way to reach God according to the Vārkarīs is therefore to ask for His grace. God indeed is only waiting for the devotion of man so that He can manifest Himself to him. It is in that light that the various avatāras of God and specially Viṭhobā must be understood. According to the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa assumes an avatāra whenever the harmonious order of the world is going astray and dharma ceases to be observed: "From age to age I am born in order to protect the good men and destroy the wicked." If we take into consideration the various lists of 'avatāras' given by the Purāṇas, most of them are aimed at the destruction of some evil which was threatening the very life of the world. The Vārkarī sees the avatāra in a somewhat different light: God assumes a form in answer to and in recompense for the devotion of a bhakta. Pure devotion only attracts God and that is why Puṇḍalīka was rewarded by Kṛṣṇa. This idea is common to all Vārkarī poets. Eknāth says: "He stood, his hands on his hips, for the sake of the bhakta Puṇḍalīka,"[4] and "Puṇḍalīka has made Parabrahma to stand up."[5] Tukārām says: "For the sake of Puṇḍalīka he took his stand on the pebbly shore:"[6] For his worshippers' sake he has assumed a shape." "You assume a form to serve your worhippers."[7] "The Saints, O God, have made thee lay thy hand on thy hips." "It is we who have set Him upright by our own desire for Him."

The Rev. Fraser and J. F. Edwards were mistaken when they spoke of "the sordid — though sincere — idolatry of the vast multitude of Tukārām's Deccan followers to-day": Tukārām they say, "regarded as sanctioned by time and custom the worship of Viṭhobā, the idol at Paṇḍharpūr." They mention that Tukārām said "He assumes name and form to protect devotion," and they infer that his prevailing view was "that God is really present in the image or idol." The position of Tukārām, and of any Vārkarī is quite different: in a beautiful abhaṅg, Tukārām describes the nature of Viṭhobā:

(Nāhī rūpa)[8]

1

He has no form nor any name,
nor place of abode.

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[4] *O* 1748. [5] *O* 35. [6] *IP* 3382. [7] *IP* 507.

[8] *IP* 2935. See : FRASER, J. N. and EDWARDS, J. F. *Life and Teaching. of Tukārām*, pp. 148, 151.

2

But wherever you go there He is,
Viṭhṭhala, our mother and sister.

3

He has neither form nor transformation,
He fills all things that move or not.

4

He is neither nirguṇa nor saguṇa,
Who can know Him?

5

Tukā says:
He will never turn towards those
who have no faith in their heart.

Although they say that Viṭhobā is a form of Kṛṣṇa, the great Vārkarī Saints never insist too much on the Purāṇic legends connected with this god, and when they do, it is always in a symbolical way. It is true that minor poets like Śrīdhara in his Pānduraṅga Mahātmya dwell at length on the details of the coming of Kṛṣṇa to Paṇḍharpūr but it is on account of the poetical character of this work. For the Saints, Viṭhobā is not only the form of Kṛṣṇa or of Viṣṇu, but he is first the form of Parabrahma. Mahipati in the Bhaktalīlāmṛta says:

> "In order to save those who are clumsy and ignorant
> Puṇḍalīka brought on earth a great boon:
> He made Parabrahma stand visibly on a brick,
> And by the sight and worship of this image
> Everybody is saved." (V. 118).

Nāmdev says :

(Nirguṇaci vaibhava)[9]

The glory of the one who is without quality has come,
In order to be loved.
It has assumed the form of Viṭhṭhala.

2.

If you see His image always new and beautiful,
You do not need to perform austerities.

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[9] *O* 1661.

3.
He is the transcendent, the absolute knowledge
Of the twenty four distinctions and the thousand
differences.

4.
He has made the Vedas to be silent, He is
a mystery for the Śruti and an enigma for the Purāṇas.

Saint Puṇḍalīka has given us the bliss of love
that forgets all creatures.

6.
Nāma says :
We, the without-Lord, we are waiting
for our eyes to open.

Not only do the Vārkarīs call Viṭhobā by the names of Kṛṣṇa and of Viṣṇu, but by those of Śiva, Pāṇḍuraṅga, and Harihara as well. Therefore the statement of Kālelkar[10] that "on a point the Mānbhāv are in absolute opposition with the other Vaiṣṇava sects: although they worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Dattātreya they consider them as incarnations of Parabrahma and not of Viṣṇu who is according to them a minor deity, not able to give salvation to his devotees," is not absolutely accurate. We have seen by the quotations mentioned above that the Vārkarīs also consider Viṭhobā as the incarnation of Parabrahma. They, however, differ radically from the Mānbhāv in that they see no differences between Viṣṇu and Śiva who are forms of Parabrahma as well. This non-sectarian spirit of the Vārkarīs is important to note: it explains why in Mahārāṣṭra there has never been any struggle between the devotees of various gods as has happened in other parts of India. The Mānbhāv by their sectarian character excluded themselves from the Hindu community in Mahāraṣṭra.

According to the Vārkarīs, therefore, the purpose of the incarnations is for God to meet the desire of his devotee. It is a free intervention of God for the sake of the 'bhaktas'. For, as we have seen man is not able to reach God by his own strength, if God and man are to meet, it is possible only if God goes to man. And this, for the Vārkarīs, is not only a possibility but a fact that really happened when God became Viṭhṭhala "for the sake of Puṇḍalīka". This is what causes the everlasting joy of the Vārkarī. God has come. The duty of man thereafter is there-

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[10] KALEKAR, N. *La secte Mânbhav*, pp. 63, 4.

fore to consecrate himself totally to the devotion of Viṭhobā, because it is the only way to obtain the liberation.

This explains the extrardinary devotion of the Vārkarī for Viṭhobā, which is not, against the opinion of Nelson Fraser, a case of idolatry. Viṭhobā is everything for his devotee. This attitude of the Vārkarī towards Viṭhobā is expressed in many abhaṅgs. Nāmdev for instance says:

(mātā pitā bandhu)[11a]

1.
You are, O Viṭhṭhala, my mother,
my father and my brother:
you are my sister and my beloved friend.

2.
I shall, O my father, go to you,
I shall meet you and stay near you.
You are, O Viṭhṭhala, the duty of my caste,
my mother's house and the very essence of my life.

3.
You are, O Viṭhṭhala, the treasure of science,
my life and my only remedy.
You are my austerities and my religious observances,
The holy places, the offerings, and my merit.

4.
You are O Viṭhṭhala, my mystical mantra,
my deity, the beginning and the end:
O Viṭhobā, you are the King of the earth,
The King of heaven, the form of Brahma.

5.
You are, O Viṭhobā, my moral rule and my judgment,
my truth, my courage, my religion.
O Viṭhobā, you are my fortune and my glory,
my absorption and now my contentment.

6.
You are, O Viṭhobā, the observances that
lead to Samādhi.

Nāmā says :
O Viṭhobā Keśava, you are the soul of my soul.

[11a] *O* 1684.

Thus, according to these words, Viṭhobā must be for the Vārkarī his true family and the place where he longs to be. In countless poems Viṭhobā is called a Mother, the Mother of the bhaktas. He also takes the place of all religious rules or rites, the only way to bestow Samādhī on man. And it must be noticed that in this abhaṅg, Nāmdev does not consider Viṭhobā as any specific god, but as 'Brahmamūrti', i.e. a form of the Absolute. Tukārām in a very similar abhaṅg expresses the same feelings towards Viṭhobā with perhaps a more personal note:

(Viṭhṭhala amacē jīvana)[11b]
Viṭhṭhala is our life, and the place where the
Scriptures dwell:
In Viṭhṭhala all spiritual powers are,
On Viṭhṭhala our meditation rests.

2.
Viṭhṭhala is my family God,
Viṭhṭhala is my fortune, my caste, and my mind.
Viṭhṭhala is my merit and my goal,
I love the splendour of Viṭhṭhala.

3.
Viṭhṭhala pervades all beings,
He fills the seven subterranean worlds,
Viṭhṭhala is spread over the three worlds
Viṭhṭhala dwells in the heart of the saints.

4.
Viṭhṭhala is the very essence of our life,
Viṭhṭhala became young to give us His grace.
Viṭhṭhala assumed a form for our love,
Viṭhṭhala puts the world in motion.

5.
Tukā says :
Viṭhṭhala is our father, mother and uncle,
Viṭhṭhala is our brother and sister,
We have no affection for our family apart from Him,
Now, there is no one else.

Thus the Vārkarī believes in the omnipresence and omnipotence of Viṭhobā, precisely because he is the absolute. But this abhaṅg draws

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[11b] *O* 2541.

a conclusion from this nature of God. If God is all He must also be our all. We must have love only for Him. But if the Vārkarī must love only Viṭhṭhala, what about the other gods of the Hindu Pantheon ?

The attitude of the Manbhāv towards gods other than Kṛṣṇa is one of contempt. They do not even belong to the essence of Parameśvara in which everything else in the Universe is comprised: Parameśvara consists of Brahma, Iśvara, and Māyā. But the 'daivatas' or gods are left outside this whole. Thus among the eternal things, 'nityavastu' there are three kinds of beings: Parameśvara, the 'jīvas' or individual souls, and the 'daivatas' or gods. The 'daivatas' try to tempt men by promising them a false liberation, but they are absolutely not able to give liberation to the individual soul, they can only offer it an illusory reward or 'phala' which does not relieve it from 'saṁsāra'. The Mānbhāv must therefore avoid every sort of worship given to these gods, and fight against their lures to remain on the true way to final liberation or 'mokṣamārga'.[12]

It would appear after a superficial examination that the attitude of the Vārkarīs towards gods other than Viṭhobā is of the same kind. The Vārkarī must worship Viṭhṭhala and him alone: Tukārām expresses this idea in the following abhaṅg :

(Na puje āṇikā devā)[13]

1.

I neither worship nor serve other gods:
I esteem none but Keśava.
When I am at thy feet, what do I need ?
or from whom else shall I ask it ?

2.

I neither hear nor speak the praise of others:
I delight in none but Viṭhṭhala.

3.

I gaze on His holy face alone,
I never leave the Lord of Paṇḍharī.

4.

I do not look for liberation nor toil for it,
I do not fear the endless rebirth of the Saṁsāra.

5.

Tukā says :
Let me feel there is nothing but Keśava.

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[12] KALEKAR, pp. 94 ff.

[13] *O* 617.

Tukārām has very hard words to say against gods other than Viṭhṭhala, for instance in the abhaṅg

(Navhe jākhāi)[14]

1.
Here is no Jākhāī or Jotihāī,
no Māyāraṇī or Mesābāi.

2.
Powerful is my King of Paṇḍharī,
The God of all these gods.

3.
Raṇḍī, Caṇḍī, Śaktī,
who devour flesh and drink alcohol.

4.
Bahirao, Khaṇḍerao, who are gods
Only for the sake of bread and meat.

5.
The monstrous Gaṇobā,
greedy for lāḍus and sweets.

6.
Muñjyā and Mhaiśāsura,
who could esteem these gluttons ?

7.
Vetāla and Phetala,
Let their dark face be burned!

Tukā says:
Rest of your mind on the husband of Rakhumāī.

It looks as if Tukārām had only contempt for all the gods he mentioned in this abhaṅg. In several other abhaṅgs the same feeling is expressed: "The mother of the Śāktas is a sow ... is an ass..."[15] and "they say that Śiva, Śaktī, Sūrya, Gaṇapati are all one with Viṣṇu: it is a foolish fancy to bestow Godhead on other gods."[16] "Many have been lost through not worshipping the Lord of Paṇḍharī. They worship the greedy and false gods that beg and pursue men for food."[17] "Abandon-

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[14] *O* 627.

[15] *IP* 796.

[16] *IP* 4480.

[17] *IP* 800.

ing Hara and Hari they put their faith in worthless deities... They worship the monstrous belly of Gaṇeśa."[18]

But it would be wrong to confuse the attitude of the Vārkarī with that of the Mānbhāv. What Tukārām condemns in the passages quoted above is not the gods as such, but a false attitude towards them. What is wrong according to the Vārkarīs is to believe that gods are evil powers, that they can be propitiated by food or by offerings of money, or by sacrifices and rites. The only attitude towards gods is an inner devotion for them, a complete faith in them, accompanied by the will to change one's evil way into a right approach to God. Tukārām says[19]: "You may go into the desert and preach, regarding all stones therein as Viṭhṭhala, the chief thing needed is faith; God comes quickly and stands where He finds faith." There is no harm in worshipping any representation of God as long as we do it with faith, because faith will please God and He will reward it by His presence: so, says Tukārām, "Go on worshipping them, no one can be angry with you: they will diffuse light in their own proper place."[20] Besides, "Everything is the form of Brahma (brahmarūpa): There is no place void of Him: then how can you say that this stone-image is not God."[21] God is thus also dwelling in those images in the same way as he is dwelling in everything, and He knows how to adapt Himself to the level of his worshipper: "This merciful God will show himself to each in a form that each can understand: I have embraced the feet on the brick, where the embodied and bodiless gods dwell together."[22]

Therefore, for the Vārkarīs the stone-image of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr is not God in the narrow sense that God is located in it and nowhere else. It is only an image: Says Tukārām: "We have formed a Viṣṇu of stone, but the stone is not Viṣṇu: the worship of Viṣṇu is offered to Viṣṇu, the stone remains in the form of a stone."[23] The image of stone is a means to show our devotion to the One who is beyond our perception: and we must must not be deceived by our senses: "We enclose Thee in metal to worship Thee, but there are fourteen worlds within Thee. We carry Thee round and display Thee with fond affection, but thou hast neither form nor features. We sing songs for Thee, but Thou art far beyond speech. We put garlands round Thee, but Thou art untouched by our actions."[24]

The numerous poems describing the image of Viṭhobā must not therefore be misinterpreted as an expression of idolatrous worship. Indeed, their wording itself should preserve us from such a mistake. The poets describe the image of Viṭhobā as beautiful and graceful: they lyrically emphasize its handsomeness, they describe its ornaments and its shining colour, and we have seen that this image is, as a matter of fact, rough and ugly. They describe it with two hands, or four hands, holding this or that weapon, and we know that the image has only two hands, and holds only the conch shell. The reason for these descriptions is not merely a poetical exaggeration: the poets see behind the poorly carved image the glory of the Indescribable One, and it is this one they worship through this inadequate stone representation.

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[18] *IP* 797.

[19] *IP* 4006.

[20] *IP* 418.

[21] *IP* 308.

[22] *IP* 1453.

[23] *IP*.262.

[24] *IP* 2870.

Such is the Vārkarī attitude towards stone-images of God, especially towards the image of their beloved Viṭhobā. And indeed it would be queer of a sect which is essentially popular to condemn or discard the use of images through which even the simplest mind can understand the One beyond them. We are far from the contemptuous attitude of the Mānbhāv which certainly contributed to deprive them of popular audience. The leading Vārkarī principle is that God must be understood by everybody. It is the reason why images are used: it is also the reason why instead of difficult austerities or abstruse philosophical researches which only few could follow, the Vārkarī prefers means of purification that anybody can practise. One of them is, as we have seen before, the pilgrimage. But the pilgrimage itself is only a training in the simple methods that the Vārkarīs advocate for progressing in spiritual life and finally reaching complete liberation: these methods are the uttering of the name of God, the listening to the Kīrtans, and the companionship of the Saints.

That these three methods are dear to the heart of the Vārkarīs is evident from perusing any of their hymn-books, where the chapters called 'nāmapara', 'kīrtanapara' and 'saṅtapara' are to be found. Inddee, the chapter on the Name of God comes immediately after the chapter on the Image of God (rūpāpara) and for the Vārkarī the utterance of the Name is the most important part of bhakti': they even say that it is the whole of Bhakti. In the Jñānesvarī[25] already it is said: "By the celebration of the Name they have destroyed the "raison d'être" of repentance: sin has been banished out of the world. Self-control and restraint have ceased to have any efficacy. Places of pilgrimage have become of no avail ... Thus by the celebration of my Name, they have put an end to the misery of the world." So by uttering the Name of God, the devotee is spared the trouble to toil on any other spiritual method.

The name of God has a great power on God himself: Nāmdev says[26]: "God may remain concealed but cannot conceal His name; when

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[25] Jñânesvarî, 9.197-209. See : RANADE, *Mysticism* ... p. 114.
[26] *IP* 2794.

we have once uttered His name, He cannot escape from us." And Tukārām: "If we only utter the name of God, God will stand before us. In that way should we meditate on him." It will also transform the devotee into God, provided it is done unceasingly. For, by the utterance of the Name of God man is able to stay in the presence of God throughout all his life, whatever he may be doing. According to Tukārām,[27] "He who utters the name of Rāma while walking, gets the merit of a sacrifice at every step. Blessed is his body. It is itself a place of pilgrimage. He who says Rāma while doing his work is always merged in 'samādhī'. He who utters the name of Rāma while eating gets the merit of a fast even though he may have taken his meals. He who utters the name of Rāma without intermission receives liberation though living."

The power of God's name purifies men from all sins. Tukārām says: "When you utter the name of Viṭhṭhala no sin can stay near you. Uttering his name, it takes not one instant to burn up millions of the five great sins."[28] And, "Even men defiled by countless sins, men unclean to the backbone, even such are purified by Hari's name before a moment can pass ... The root of countless sins came with power over Vālmīki: by Hari's name he was made as pure as Ganges' water."[29]

If one utters the name of God, he does not need to perform any other religious observances. "The study of the Śāstras, the recitation of the Vedas, cannot equal this name, nor pilgrimage to Prayāga and Kāshi and all holy places. To suffer under the saw or wheel cannot equal it: the name of Viṭhṭhala, says Tukā, is the essence of everything."[30] "He has fulfilled all rules of religion who utters the name of Viṭhṭhala."[31] "You are set free from all obligations if you recite the name of Viṭhṭhala continually."[32] Indeed all these religious observances are present in the utterance of God's name: "Smooth are these names, says Tukā, repeat them inceasingly, Hari, Govinda, Rāmakṛṣṇa. Merit, feast days, holy places have come to bathe in the ocean of those names."[33]

The names that the Vārkarīs generally utter are the names of Viṣṇu: first of all naturally the name of Viṭhṭhala, but as well any of the thousand names of Viṣṇu (sahasranāma) and specially the names of Hari, Kṛṣṇa, Gopāla, Govinda, Rāma, Keśava, Rāmakṛṣṇa etc. .. During the pilgrimage the most frequent repetitions are those of the names 'Rāma Kṛṣṇa Hari' and 'Viṭhobā Rukmiṇī.'

There is still another way to celebrate the names of God and even easier than the utterance of God's name, it is to listen to it. Attending the 'Kīrtans' and listening to the 'Kathās' is the easiest way of practising 'bhakti'. Giving 'Kīrtans' is the holiest of a santa's duty." The 'Kīrtan' of the name of God, says Tukārām, is the easiest way for 'sādhanā'. No need to go to a distant forest, Nārāyaṇa will himself come to the house of a Saint....There is no other way for 'sādhanā'."[34]

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[27] *J* 3667.

[28] *IP* 134.

[29] *IP* 1432.

[30] *IP* 2299.

[31] *IP* 2389.

[32] *IP* 134.

[33] *IP* 1544.

Tukārām gives several suggestions for the celebration of the 'kīrtan'. It should not be done in a noisy place: "A preaching in the crowded bazaar, this is what the Lord of Paṇḍharī does not love. It is all a pretence to earn money."[35] The preacher should prepare himself by spiritual readings: "We must look into sacred books before we preach; then only will preaching bear fruit. Otherwise it will be idle talk; the vestiges of desire will survive it. Study the Vedas before you sing the attributes of Hari; your knowledge will then be truly acquired."[36] He should be strong and in good health." A 'kīrtan' requires soundness of limbs, do not allow my body to grow weak, O Pāṇḍuraṅga. I do not mind if my life is cut short, but so long as I live let me be sound, in order that I may perform your 'kīrtan'."[37] He should not allow himself to get into hysterics: "As he sings the praises of God, he weeps and throws himself on the ground; tears flow from his eyes, though no true tears, such is a deceitful imposter; Govind is not with him."[38] He should not allow people to bestow honours or money on him." "One who performs a kīrtan should not have his forehead besmeared with fragrant scent. One should not allow himself to be garlanded with flowers. One should not ask for grain or for grass, for a horse or a bullock: they who give money, and they who accept money, both go to hell."[39]

"Great is the power of the Kīrtan, says Tukā: this evidently is Thy grace." "Death tells his messengers, 'Go not to the place where the Name is being celebrated. You have no power over that place'." This is because, as Eknāth says, when a man devoutly performs the Kīrtan of God, God shows himself before him. Great is the happiness of a 'kīrtan' when God stands in front on his own accord. He wards off all calamities by taking a disc and a mace in his hands." Tukārām says the same: "The great disc of God moves round and wards off all dangers. God himself stands as a door-keeper at the place with a bludgeon and the moving disc in his hands."

Another side-effect of the performing of a kīrtan is to sanctify not only the listeners and the preacher, but the very place where it is done. Says Tukārām, "the very sands at the place are holy .. Holy places come to be purified." That explains why in so many abhaṅgs poets celebrate the holiness of the sandy bank of the Candrabhāgā where kīrtans are held in the peacefulness of the night.

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[34] *IP* 2458.

[35] *IP* 2486.

[36] *IP* 2329.

[37] *IP* 472.

[38] *IP* 788.

[39] *IP* 3084.

To give 'kīrtan' is one of the duties of the 'santa'. This leads us to consider now this last important doctrine of the Vārkarī panth concerning the "company of the Saints." The Vārkarī conception of the 'santa' is derived directly from the traditional conception of the 'guru'. The Guru is necessary for the beginner to start on the spiritual path: he is the one who gives initiation. As it is beautifully expressed in the Jñāneśvarī, "The grace of the 'guru', like a true mother, rears up the spiritual aspirant on the lap of Ādhāra Sakti and rocks him to and fro in the cradle of the heart." In the Nātha-Saṁpradāya, as in any school of Yoga, the 'guru' had a very important part to play. The training in yoga requires a qualified teacher, specially for the Haṭha Yoga, and the practice of the various 'asanas'. Nivṛttinātha, the brother and the 'guru' of Jñānadeva received such a training from the hands of the Nātha teacher Gahinīnātha. It is most likely that in his turn Nivṛttinātha gave such a training in Yoga to Jñānadeva. What is sure is that he gave him his spiritual initiation, and the Jñāneśvarī is full of praise for the services that Nivṛttinātha did to his brother: Indeed Jñānadeva attributes all that he knows and that he is to the teaching of his 'guru'.

In the Vārkarī saṁpradāya there is no question of any yogic initiation to be given by the 'guru' to his disciple. Nevertheless the role of the 'guru' is extremely important. All the great santas like Ekanātha or Tukārām, for instance, expressed in numerous eulogies their indebtedness to their 'guru'. He is the one who, according to the Upaniṣadic tradition, gave them the sacred 'mantra'. He is the one who unfolded the royal teaching of 'bhakti' for their benefit. But the conception of the guru receives a new importance from the part he has to play in the bhakti system.

We have seen that according to this system, God was beyond the reach of man left to his own resources. Man can know God only if God reveals Himself to him by His grace. This is where the 'santa' intervenes. The 'santa' is the one who has attracted God on account of his pure devotion as happened in the case of Puṇḍalīka. He thus becomes the representative of God, more even, God himself. He is the bridge between God and man, the only possible link. As the Jñāneśvarī puts it, God regards the 'santa' as the very crest-jewel on His head: Kṛṣṇa says "the 'santa' is the object of my adoration. I worship him by the sport-lotus of my hand... He is the whole of my treasure, I derive contentment only in his company." Tukārām says : "God is the nurseling of the bhaktas, how is the one united to the other ? God is a kind mother to his bhaktas. "The bhaktas are the father of God." "God comes running to the place where the santas are together." "How He runs like a famished man to wait closely on Puṇḍalīka ! Nārāyaṇa has forgotten his own dignity ! He stands with his hands on his hips, he does not even ask leave to sit down."

On account of their sins and impurities, men cannot expect to be near God, or to make Him listen to them: thus the 'santas' who live near God become the ambassadors of men near God. They will pray Him for them, intercede for them. Tukārām downcast at the view of his imperfection put his only hopes in the intercession of the Santas on his behalf: "O you, says he, who are near his feet, intercede for me." This nature of the 'santas' explains why the Vārkarī always advise people to seek the company of the Saints. This is the only way to receive the grace of God. To serve the santas is the surest way to please God: Tukārām says "I will carry on my shoulders the sandals and the rucksack of the santas: I shall dance before them with cymbals in my hands. I know nothing of the ritual of worship, or means of attainment, or mystic contemplation, meditation, postures, trance: I am ignorant, unashamed, I cannot recognize musical notes. All my family possessions and treasures, says Tukā, are the feet of the santas."

The Vārkarīs therefore show a great devotion towards the santas: their favourites are naturally all the great mystics of their panth, from Jñāneśvara to Tukārām, whom they consider as avatāras of divine bhaktas. Besides they bestow a special affection on Puṇḍalīka. the prince of the bhaktas, the beloved of Viṭhṭhala. Among the devotees of the tradition their favourites are Arjuna, who received the teaching of Kṛṣṇa himself, Nārada, Sanaka, Uddhav, Śuka, Tumbaru, Pralhāda, etc. ...

From the brief sketch of the Vārkarī teachings given in this chapter we may see that the spirit of the Vārkarī has two centres: a very high conception of God considered as transcendent and absolute and at the same time the constant preoccupation to make salvation possible for all. Gradually, through the intercession of the 'santas' and the devotion to Viṭhobā, through simple and efficient spiritual methods as the utterance of the name of God, the listening to the 'kīrtans' and the contact with santas, through the annual tapa of the pilgrimage and the enthusiasm of its huge gathering, they aim at leading their followers towards the highest peak of spiritual life, the unity with, and the absorption in, God.

CHAPTER VI

ETYMOLOGY

Prof. L. Renou at the end of a short description of the god Viṭhobā says: "The form Viṭhobā or Viṭhṭhala has not yet been satisfactorily elucidated."[1] And Mr. J. E. Abbot in a foot-note of his 'Stotramālā' says: 'The true derivation of the names of Viṭhobā and Viṭhṭhala is, however, an unsettled question."[2] Various solutions have been offered but none has yet been successful in settling the question definitely. Instead of offering a new solution or accepting any of the existing ones it is necessary to study them carefully before arriving at the conclusion.

Out first step therefore shall be to clear the ground by a critical examination of each hypothesis. This method will not be merely negative, but will enable us to rule out the etymologies that are merely fanciful. It will also enable us to look upon this problem from every possible point of view and finally allow us to ascertain the various personalities that the different writers thought they had discovered in Viṭhobā.

It is precisely this ambivalence of Viṭhobā which is the reason why there is such a diversity of opinions about the derivation of the name of Viṭhobā. This god, although almost exclusively worshipped by the devotees of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, is nonetheless claimed, if not actually worshipped, by other sects and religions as well.

Not only do the Vārkarīs consider him as an 'avatāra' of Viṣṇu, but some think that he is a form of Śiva-Paṇḍuraṅga, and other of Harihara. The Jains claim that he is but a form of Neminath,[3] while the Buddhist tell us that he is none but the Buddha himself.[4] Different creeds have thus been able to lay claim to Viṭhobā, because the derivation of his name has so far not been established conclusively. However, the names of Viṣṇu, Śiva or Harihara may be applied to him since, according to the Vārkarī 'santas', Viṭhobā is a form of 'parabrahma' and thus may be worshipped under any name.

Those who have propounded various theories on the etymology of Viṭhobā or Viṭhṭhala can be classified into two groups: according to one group the word Viṭhobā was originally an adjective, which later began to be used as a descriptive noun signifying the deity of Paṇḍharpūr. According to the other, it is a personal noun and therefore representative name of a personal god. Both the view-points offer considerable interest to the historians for different reasons. The theorists of the first group show a tendency to interpret the etymology of Viṭhṭhala to conform with their ideas of the attributes of the god. They regard the name as a symbol and give it a mystical interpretation. The view-point of the second group involves historical problems regarding the variations of the languages spoken at Paṇḍharpūr under the successive dynasties ruling the Deccan, and the evolution of the Marāṭhī language from Prākrit.

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[1] RENOU, L. *L'Inde Classique*, p. 503.

[2] ABBOT, J. E. *Stotramâlâ*, p. 166.

[3] CHOPADE, T. K. *Paṇḍharpûrcā Viṭhobā*, p. 26.

[4] KULKARNI, A. R. *Paṇḍharicā Viṭhṭhala.*

We have seen that the Vārkarīs lay great emphasis on the importance of the Name. This means that it is unlikely that at least since the time Viṭhobā came to be the object of a Bhakta cult, his name underwent any important variation.

Before starting our study of the various hypotheses concerning the derivation of the name of Viṭhobā, we must consider the different forms of that name.

VITHOBĀ		The most popular form. This may be compared with the names of other deities in Mahārāṣṭra, ending in bā, as Kanhobā, Khaṇḍobā, Mhasobā, Jotibā, Bahirobā, Nāgobā, Bhulobā, Vāghobā, Morobā, Venkobā, Narsobā, Mhaskobā, Cheḍobā, Girobā, etc. where the suffix "bā" is a contracted form for bābā and expresses the loving respect of the speaker for the god. This suffix is of a more general use and may be found used after any personal name: in that way the bhaktas call Jñānadeva and Tukārām, Jñānobā and Tukobā respectively.
VITHĀBAĪ	—	The feminine form of the former name, used when Viṭhobā is considered as a mother by his devotee.
VITHOBAĪ	—	Same as the precedent form.
VITHTHAL	—	One of the more common forms found in the lyrical literature of the bhaktas of Paṇḍharpūr. It is more literary than Viṭhobā and the oldest attested form.
VITHU		Contracted form of Viṭhobā.
VITHO		Contracted form of Viṭhobā.
VITHĀĪ		Feminine form of the precedent.

ITTAL[5] — Popular spelling for Viṭhṭhal used by illiterate people.
ITUBĀ — Popular spelling for Viṭhobā.
ITU[5] — Contracted form of the precedent.

The name Viṭhṭhala itself is spelt either Viṭṭhala or Viṭhṭhala. Viṭṭhala is phonetically the correct spelling, but as the Vārkarī poets always spell it Viṭhṭhala, we have followed this custom throughout this thesis.

Many gods in India are called after their essential quality or their office. This method admirably fitted with the theory of the 'avatāras': the different names standing for different aspects of the same deity. Some devotional hymns as for instance the "Viṣṇu Sahasranāma", are but an endless succession of adjectives which illustrate the inexhaustible creative power of the Indian imagination. Some names were originally adjectives which came later to be used as nouns. Gaṇeśa is "the Head of the groups of followers (of Śiva)", Naṭarāja is "the prince of the dancers", Sabhāpati is "the president of the assembly (of the gods)", Lakṣmī is "Fortune", even Viṣṇu is perhaps "The all pervading One". Several writers aver that the name of Viṭhobā belongs to this category but as the meaning of the adjective concerned is not evident, several solutions are possible.

We must give first place to the explanation given by Tukārām in one of his abhaṅgs. It is not intended to be a scientific derivation, or a derivation at all : it is rather a kind of pun, but it reveals how the word can be made to express a philosophical or spiritual idea. The abhaṅg runs as follows:[6]

Vīca kelā ṭhobā
mhaṇonī nā̃va tẽ Viṭhobā
kā re neṇā tyācẽ nā̃va
kāy vedāsī nahī ṭhāva. etc.

Tukārām separates the word into two parts, 'vī' and 'ṭhobā', 'vī' stands for the Sanskrit root 'vīd' and means knowledge or wisdom, 'ṭhobā' according to V. N. Jog means "a standing image" corresponding to the Sanskrit 'ākāra', but it is more likely that Tukārām means here by 'ṭhobā' a storehouse because in many other passages Viṭhobā is described as the "sea of knowledge" the ocean of wisdom", "the place where all wisdom dwells", and this meaning is more in keeping with the general theme of the whole abhaṅg which reads as follows:

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[5] For the popular forms, see : Sarojinî **Babar**, *Amcî gâṇi*, No. 10. and from the same, *Jatyâvarîl goḍ gâṇî*, pp. 22, 5.

[6] *IP* 4119.

1.
Viṭhobā is the store-house of all knowledge,
That is why He is called Viṭhobā.

2.
Why, do you not know his name ?
What ? Do the Vedas not know it ?

3.
Śeṣa started praising Him, with the result
that his tongues were split into double their number
and he had to become his couch.

4.
Tukā says:
He has power over Time itself.

We shall now consider the hypothesis of Mr. A. R. Kulkarni and side by side the definition of Viṭhṭhala given in Molesworth's Marāṭhi English Dictionary.[7] Both are based on the view that Viṭhṭhala is of Buddhist origin. Indeed Mr. Kulkarni claims that Viṭhṭhala is no other than Buddha himself.

The derivation of Viṭhṭhala according to the tradition is from the Marāṭhī word 'vīṭ' meaning a brick and 'ṭhal' akin to Sanskrit 'sthala' meaning place. From this it is claimed as we shall see at the end of this chapter that Viṭhṭhala means "One who stands on a brick." Mr. Kulkarni[8] however considers 'ṭhala' to be a Pāli word and uses it as one of his arguments for identifying Viṭhṭhala with Buddha. However, what connection there can be between Buddha and a brick we are not told. Mr. Kulkarni also states that the compound name 'Viṭ-ṭhala' was formed at a time when Pāli was the dominant language in Mahārāṣṭra, which time he places about the reign of Aśoka. Unfortunately, no proof can be adduced to show that Pāli was ever a dominant language in Mahārāṣṭra. Nor is there any proof that 'ṭhala' is a Pāli word. But even if it is granted, it is absurd to imagine that the Pāli word was combined with a Marāṭhī word 'viṭ' at the time of Aśoka, for the simple reason that the Marāṭhī did not come into existence till about the eighth century A.D. Mr. Kulkarni's thesis is not therefore based on solid ground.

The derivation of Viṭhṭhala as described in Molesworth's Dictionary is based on a dissection of the word as follows:

'vi' from 'vid' meaning "knowledge or understanding."

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[7] MOLESWORTH, J. T. *Marathi-English Dictionary*, p. 757.

[8] KULKARNI, *Paṇḍharicā* etc...,

'ṭha' a cypher, i.e. "*privation or destitution*".
'la' for 'lati', meaning "he takes".

The meaning of Viṭhṭhala is "receiver of the ignorant and destitute of understanding."

This meaning is also adopted by A. Robertson who writes,[9] "Molesworth preserves a popular hypothesis relating to the meaning of the name Viṭhṭhala." He further uses it as an argument to show that the cult of Viṭhobā was originally a Buddhist cult.

This interpretation is in Molesworth's own words merely descriptive and not derivative. As such it has no scientific value as regards the origin of the name, but it has an interesting aspect in that it is an interpretation which springs from the intuition and innate wisdom of the common people. Viṭhobā would be the One who does not care for the wisdom of the so-called wise man, but who finds his delight in protecting the simple people. This quality of God is not, as Robertson contends, found only in Buddhism, it is indeed a common feature of all devotional religions.

We have now to examine two solutions which seem to have a sounder philological basis. R. S. Joshi and V. K. Rajvade give us two linguistic possibilities which both presuppose that Viṭhṭhala is a qualifying adjective and not a personal name.

For Mr. Joshi,[10] Viṭhṭhala comes from two Sanskrit words: 'viṣṭara' and 'śrava', meaning the 'far-renowned'. According to Monier-Williams' Sanskrit Dictionary,[11] this is a name of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. It is not proved however that the Paṇḍharpūr image was ever called 'viṣṭara-śrava': on the contrary it was already called Viṭhṭhala when its fame was purely local. The spread of the cult took place much later. Besides, even granting the parallelism between 'viṣṭara' and 'viṭhthala', which is not obvious, what happened to the other part of the compound, 'śrava', by far the more important?

Mr. Rajvade [12] also derives Viṭhṭhala from the Sanskrit 'viṣṭhala' (viṣṭara) meaning far or remote, but he suggests another interpretation. Viṭhṭhala would mean "the one who dwells in a far away, remote place in the forest." There is however no authentic evidence that Paṇḍharpūr was situated in the midst of a forest. In fact, the earliest inscription (516 A.D.) in which we find the first mention of Paṇḍharpūr, speaks of it as a village surrounded by other villages, thus indicating a populated district and not a forest. The first mention of the name of Viṭhṭhala is found in an inscription at the beginning of the thirteenth century only.

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[9] ROBERTSON, A. *The Mahâr Folk*, p. 94.

[10] *JRAS* 23.234.

[11] MONIER-WILLIAM, M. *Sanskrit-English Dictonary*, p. 999.

[12] *BISMQ* 7.2.96.

The various etymologies that will now be examined are based on the assumption that Viṭhobā is a corrupted form of Viṣṇu. The problem is then to find the intermediaries between these two names. The assumption in itself is very alluring. For, according to the tradition, Viṭhṭhala is Kṛṣṇa who is an Avatāra of Viṣṇu. Kṛsna as a child is worshipped in India under many names such as Bālājī, Vyaṅkaṭeśa, Bālakṛṣṇa, Murlīdhara, Veṇugopāla, etc. Viṭhṭhala being one of them, it would not be surprising that he would be called after Viṣṇu.

The Marāṭhī language came from Sanskrit through a Prākrit known as Mahārāṣṭrī. The Prākrit is likely to be the obvious intermediary between the names of Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala. We must therefore examine what the Prākrit forms for Viṣṇu are. This name is mentioned in the following inscriptions under the following forms:

At Mahāḍ (Akolā)	....	Vheṇu[13]
At Bāśīm „	....	Veṇhu[14]
At Nāsik	....	Viṇhu[15]
At Kuḍā (Kolaba)	....	Veṇhu[16]
At Bhājā	....	Viṇhu[17]
At Nāsik	....	Viṇhu[18]
At Banavāsī	....	Viṇhu[18b]
At Amarāvatī	....	Veṇhu[19]
At Maḷavaḷḷi	....	Viṇhu[20]
At Kānherī	....	Veṇhu[20b]

We thus find two forms for Viṣṇu in Mahārāṣṭrī, 'veṇhu' and 'viṇhu' which differ only in respect of the first vowel e or i. These forms occur in inscriptions dating from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. They follow the rules of Prākrit derivation :

Sankrit 'i' becomes 'i' or 'e' in Prākrit.

Sanskrit ṣṇ becomes 'ṇh' in Prākrit (and never ṭṭh).

According to the inscriptional Prākrit[21] we have the following alterations of Sanskrit ṣṇ in Western India:

Second century B. C.	ṇh
First century B. C.	nh or ṇh

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[13] *EI* 10.1072. in LUDERS, H. *List of Brahmi Inscriptions.*

[14] *EI* 26.152,12 : MIRASHI, V. V. *The Basim Plates of Vakataka Vindhysakti* II.

[15] *EI* 10.1125.

[16] *EI* 10.1060.

[17] *ASWI* 4.83.

[18] *EI* 10.1124.

[18b] *EI* 10.1186.

[19] *EI* 10.1216.

[20] *EC* 7.Sk.263.

[20b] *EI* 10.1001, 2.

[21] MEHENDALE, M. A. *Historical Grammar of Inscriptional Prâkrit*, p. 281.

First and Second A. D.	ṇh or ṣṇ
Third century A. D.	ṇh

The Sanskrit Kṛṣṇa becomes Kānho in Prākrit, Sanskrit triṣṇa becomes tānho etc. The Prākrit form of Viṣṇu is Viṇhu or Veṇhu. From that Prākrit form it is philologically impossible to derive the Marāṭhi word Viṭhobā or Viṭhthala. The expected form of Viṣṇu in Marāthī should be Veṇu, with the usual disappearance of the aspirate, and this form is attested as we can see from the place-names Veṇupada, or Veṇunadī, etc.[22]

As the Marāṭhī Viṭhṭhala cannot come from the Sanskrit Viṣṇu through the channel of Mahārāṣṭrī, if it comes at all from Viṣṇu, it must have been through an intermediary taken from another Indian language. Several intermediaries have been proposed which we will now examine.

There are several instances where the Sanskrit word Viṣṇu seems to have become Viṭh or Viṭhṭh. The first instance is the place-name 'Veṭhadīpa'. The question of the etymology of that word gave rise to many controversies in the beginning of this century among the correspondents of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.[23] The discussion started with the mention of a passage of the Mahaparinibhaṇasutta a Pāli text dated 375 B.C.

In this text,[24] there is a description of the distribution of the relics of Buddha among various monasteries in India and Ceylon. Among the places which received a part of those relics there is the mention of a place called 'Veṭhadīpa'. For some time this word baffled the various scholars who tried to identify it on the map. Prof. Fleet[25] trying to explain that word by the usual rule of Pāli derivation suggested that it should come from Sanskrit from Viṣṭadvīpa, or Veṣṭadvīpa, or Vaiṣṭadīpa, but he confessed that he could find no mention of such a place in Sanskrit literature nor locate it on the map.

Then, in 1907, Prof. Vogel[26] discovered near Kasia in the Gorakhpūr district the ruins of an ancient Buddhist monastery, near the entrance of the monastery he found the imprint of a seal where the following words could be read: "Meeting of the monks of the

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[22] **Bloch**, J. *La formation de la Langue Marathe*, under the name "Viṭhobâ".

[23] *JRAS* 1906, 7.

[24] Mahâparinibhânasutta, c.6.

[25] *JRAS* (1906), p. 900. **Fleet**, J. F. The Tradition about the Corporeal relics of the Buddha.

[26] *JRAS* (1907), p. 1050. **Vogel**, J. Ph. Vethadipa : Viṣṇudvipa.

[27] **Dey**, N. L. *Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*, under the word "Bethadipa".

Viṣṇudvīpa monastery." This discovery seemed to establish the identity of Viṣṇudvīpa with Veṭhadīpa.

This received further support from literary evidence: though there is no Tibetan translation of the Mahaparinibhaṇasutta available, we have an account of the distribution of Buddha's relics in a Tibetan work called "the Grand Decease", in which we find the mention of Viṣṇudvipa, where the Mahaparini mentions Veṭhadīpa.[28] It is thus strongly established that Veṭhadīpa and Viṣṇudvīpa are two forms of the same name, one in Pāli and the other in Sanskrit. It would however be incorrect to infer from that evidence that Veṭha is the Pāli form for Viṣṇu. In many texts and inscriptions in Pāli we have the mention of Viṣṇu, and it is never written Veṭha but always Veṇhu, or Viṇhu. Besides ṣṇ in Sanskrit never becomes ṭh in Pāli. Then what is the etymology of Veṭhadīpa and how to reconcile it with Viṣṇudvīpa?

Prof. Vogel[29] suggested the following theory to answer those two questions. The form Veṭhadīpa, far from being derived from Viṣṇudvīpa, is the older form of the two. It represents a local form which was first written in Pālī as Veṭhadīpa, then when the Buddhists adopted Sanskrit as their official language they had to translate this form into Sanskrit which they did in using a word phonetically similar to the Pāli, but without any etymological connection with it. Viṣṇudvīpa is the Sanskritised form of Veṭhadīpa. This is clearly seen in the second part of the word. 'Dīpa' is not derived from dvīpa, but from dhape which is a corruption of Dagaba of Dhāturgarbha which means a stūpa: 'dīpa' was changed into 'dvīpa', (which is phonetically near), when the word was written in Sanskrit. In the same way the name Sila dhapa in Bengal was changed in Sila dvīpa after the revival of Hinduism.[30] The same change must have occurred in the case of 'Veṭha' which was turned into Viṣṇu, although there was no connection between the meaning of the two words.

The second instance is that of the copper-plate dated 516 A.D. which has already been mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis in connection with the name of Paṇḍharpūr.[31] In that inscription we find that the name of the brahmin to whom King Avidheya gave the grant of five villages was Jayadviṭhṭha. Mr. Khare, following the opinion of Dr. Saletore,[32] suggests that this name must be cut into two parts, 'jayad' and 'viṭhṭha' and that the second form, 'viṭhṭha' comes from the name of Viṭhṭhala. Then, two questions must be answered: first, does 'viṭhṭha' come from Viṭhṭhala, and in that case what is the meaning of the word Jayadviṭhṭha, and secondly is there any connection between this 'viṭhṭha' and Viṣṇu?

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[28] *JRAS* (1906), p. 900.
[29] *JRAS* (1907), p. 1050.
[30] DEY, Ibid.,
[31] *MAD* (1929), pp. 198 ff.
[32] SALETORE, B. A. Antiquity of Paṇḍharpûr, in *IHQ* 11.772, (1935).

If 'viṭhṭha' comes from Viṭhṭhala, what is the meaning of the compound word Jayadviṭhṭha? Jayat is the present participle of verb 'ji' which means to conquer : jayat thus means winning, conquering. But there are very few words in Sanskrit composed with this form of the verb ji. A king in Magadha is called Jayatsena or the one with winning armies. Similarly, a Pāṇḍava prince is called Jayadbala which means the same. A Sindhu-sauvīra prince is called Jayadratha or the one with a winning chariot or the conquering warrior. Thus Jayadviṭhṭha should mean the one with the winning Viṭhṭhala which is not very satisfactory. It would be philologically more correct to cut the word into 'jayad' and 'dviṭhṭha' derived from Jayad dviṣṭa.

However that may be, even in the case of viṭhṭha representing Viṭhṭhala, *there is no ground to connect it with Viṣṇu*. There is no Sanskrit word like Jayadviṣṇu. Nothing in the inscription suggests this identification. Thus the only inference possible from this instance is that the name of Viṭhṭhala may have been in use in 516 A.D.

The attempts to find an intermediary between Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala in a Prākrit other than Mahārāṣṭrī thus failed. Then if neither Mahārāṣṭrī nor any other Prākrit can be responsible for the formation of the word Viṭhṭhala, the only other possibility is to look among modern Indian languages. Marāṭhī could have borrowed a corrupt form of Viṣṇu from another language. Some scholars have suggested that the Bengali language could offer such a possibility.

Grierson[34] says: "In Bengali every 'ṣṇ' in Sanskrit is pronounced at the present day as ṣṭ. Everyone, even a pandit, pronounces Viṣṇu as Biṣṭu, Vaiṣṇava as Boiṣṭom, Kṛṣṇa as Kriṣṭo and so on," which is true enough. But this cannot possibly be an intermediary between Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala. For notwithstanding the distance which separates Paṇḍharpūr from any Bengali-speaking country, the corruption of Sanskrit 'ṣṇ' into the Bengali 'ṣṭ' is relatively modern, and we have mention of Viṭhṭhala as early as 1217 A.D.

Another language, Kannaḍa, has been proposed by other writers as a more likely solution. Several circumstances would be in favour of this theory. First Kannaḍa and Marāṭhī have a common boundary line, and Paṇḍharpūr does not lie far from this line and may have been at one time a Kannaḍa speaking district. On the other hand, the first mention of

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[33] KHARE, G. H. *Śri Viṭṭhala aṇi Paṇḍharpûra*, 2.11.

[34] *JRAS* (1908), p. 164.

Viṭhṭhala is found in an inscription in Karnāṭaka. Kannaḍa is also an older language and was already spoken in the first century A.D.[35]

The main argument in favour of this thesis is that two kings, known in Sanskrit as Viṣṇuvardhana were called in Kannaḍa one Biṭṭideva or Biṭṭiga, the other Biṭṭarasa.[36] The contention is that Biṭṭi or Biṭṭa is for Sanskrit Viṣṇu, and that Viṭṭhala is derived from those Kannaḍa forms. We would have then the following sequence : Sanskrit Viṣṇu becomes Biṭṭi in Kannaḍa which is borrowed by Marāṭhī and transformed into Viṭhṭhala. We will examine separately the two parts of this contention.

The first of the kings mentioned above is the famous Hoysaḷa Viṣṇuvardhana who ruled Dwārasamudra between 1111 A.D. and 1141 A.D. A consistent tradition relates the conversion of this king to the Vaiṣṇava faith and as this conversion is related with the change in his name, we must first deal with that tradition. It is as follows : King Viṣṇuvardhana, then called Viṭhṭhaladeva was a Jain.[37] When the great Ācārya Rāmānuja, flying from the persecution launched in his country by the Cola King against Vaiṣṇavism, came to the Hoysaḷa capital, King Viṭhṭhaladeva was convinced by the arguments of the philosopher and adopted the Vaiṣṇava faith, changing his name from Viṭhṭhaladeva to Viṣṇuvardhana.

The earliest mention of the conversion of Viṣṇuvardhana is found in the Guruparaṁparā-Prabhāva and was subsequently repeated by many chroniclers and even modern historians.[38] According to the Paraṁparā, Viṣṇuvardhana was converted at Tondannur (Tonnur), and the local legends in this town support the evidence of the Paraṁparā. But in a work earlier than the Guruparaṁparā and practically contemporaneous with the great Ācārya Rāmānuja, and called the Divyasūricarita, there is no mention of such a conversion. It seems rather surprising that an apologist of Rāmānuja could have omitted or ignored such an achievement of his guru.

According to Mr. Rao[39] (who suggests that Viṣṇuvardhana was not converted by Rāmānuja) the legend of the conversion seems to have come from a confusion between Yādāvapura (Tondanur) where the Hoysaḷa king was ruling, and Yādavagiri (Tirunārāyaṇapura) where Rāmānuja founded a temple. Nevertheless it seems difficult to agree with this because the conversion by Rāmānuja is attested by a very old and unanimous tradition, which cannot be ignored or explained away as an error made by the writer of the "Paraṁparā."

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[35] SRIKANTHA SASTRI, S. *Sources of Karnâṭaka History*, I. Intr. p. 20.

[36] KHARE, p. 14.

[37] CHOPADE, pp. 4 ff.

[38] SARMA, S. R. *Jainism and Karnâtaka Culture*, p. 170 : "The epoch making conversion of Viṣṇuvardhana".

[39] SRINIVASA RAO, V. N. *Tirupati Śrî Venkateśvar-Balajî*, (1949), p. 99.

However that may be, the date of the conversion itself is a problem. For the tradition notes that the Hoysaḷa king changed his name on account of his conversion. The first inscription where this king is called Viṣṇuvardhana is of 1098, and at that time he was not yet king but only the governor for his brother Ballāḷa I at Tonnur. Thus the conversion should have taken place before 1098. On the other hand, although the Divyasūricarita does not mention the conversion of Viṣṇuvardhana at Tonnur, it does mention the conversion of a King Viṭhṭhala at Tirupati, around 1062 A.D. We could identify this Viṭhṭhala with our Viṣṇuvardhana, but then we know that the Hoysaḷa died in 1141. The identification of the two kings would mean that Viṣṇuvardhana would have lived more than one hundred years!

The more interesting fact for our study is the change in the names of the king. Most of the historians say that he changed his name of Viṭhṭhala into Viṣṇuvardhana. For instance, Lewis Rice says: "Viṭaladeva afterwards called Viṣṇuvardhana."[40] The Mysore Archaeological Department, report for 1907-8, says : "Rāmānuja met Viṣṇuvardhana or Viṭhṭhala." Mr. Joshi gives further details[41]: "At the time when Viṣṇuvardhana was the minister of his brother Ballāḷa I, his name was in Kannaḍa 'Viṭhu', 'Viṭhal' or 'Viṭhobā'."

In spite of all these authorities, in none of the numerous inscriptions which mention this king is his name given as Viṭhṭhal, Viṭhu or Viṭhobā! Mr. C. Hayavadana Rao[42] is nearer the truth, at least as far as the spelling of the names is concerned, when he says : "Biṭṭi-deva .... embraced the religion of Viṣṇu and thence assumed his better known name of Viṣṇuvardhana." Mr. Khare still more accurately speaks of Biṭṭiga and Biṭṭideva. For in the inscriptions the Hoysaḷa King is often called Biṭṭiga, as we can see from the following inscriptions:

in 1100 A.D.	Tribhuvana-malla-biṭṭiga-hoysaḷa-deva.
in 1116 A.D.	Vīraganga-Hoysaḷa-biṭṭideva.
in 1116 A.D.	Viṣṇuvardhana-biṭṭiga-hoysaḷa-deva.
in 1117 A.D.	Viṣṇuvardhana-biṭṭiga-hoysaḷa-deva.
in 1122 A.D.	Buṭuga son of Ereyaṅga.
in 1160 A.D.	Biṭṭiga.
in 1277 A.D.	Biṭṭiga son of Ereyaṅga.

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[40] RICE, B. L. *Mysore and Coorg from the Inscriptions.*

[41] JOSHI, quoted by CHOPADE, pp. 4, 5.

[42] *MG* 5.908.

But still the more common form of this name is Biṭṭideva. We give here a list of the inscriptions in Hassan district mentioning that name.[43]

Hassan 57	Biṭṭideva Garuḍa.
Hassan 69	Biṭṭideva Garuḍa.
Hassan 119	Ballāḷa, Biṭṭideva, Udayāditya. (the three sons).
Hassan 134	Biṭṭideva (Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara).
Hassan 137	Biṭṭideva (Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara).
Belur 3	Viṣṇuvardhana Biṭṭideva Rāya.
Belur 25	Ballāḷa, Biṭṭideva, Vujayāditya.
Belur 50	Hoysḷaā Biṭṭideva Rāya.
Belur 112	Ballāḷadeva, Biṭṭideva, Udayādityadeva.
Belur 114	Vallala, Biṭṭideva, Udayaditya.
Belur 115	Biṭṭideva, son of Ereyaṅga.
Belur 170	Viṣṇuvardhana Biṭṭideva.
Belur 171	Ballāḷa, Viṣṇu, Udayāditya.
Belur 193	Ballāḷadeva, Biṭṭideva, Udayādityadeva.
Arsikere 1	Ballāḷa, Biṭṭideva, Udayāditya.
Arsikere 17	Ballaḷadeva, Biṭṭideva, Udayādityadeva.
Arsikere 68	Biṭṭideva.
Arsikere 69	Biṭṭideva.
Arsikere 123	Biṭṭideva son of Ereyaṅga.
Arsikere 127	Ballāḷa, Biṭṭideva, Udayāditya.
Arsikere 141	Ballāḷadeva, Biṭṭidevā, Udayādityadeva.
Arsikere 157	Ballāḷadeva, Biṭṭideva, Udayādityadeva.
Ch. Patna 172	Ballāḷa, Biṭṭideva, Udayāditya.
Ch. Patna 179	Ballāḷadeva, Biṭṭideva, Udayādityadeva.
Ch. Patna 184	Viragaṅga Hoysaḷa, Viṣṇuvardhana Biṭṭideva. his son Viṣṇuvardhana Śrī Narasiṅgha Hoysaḷa deva his son Viṣṇuvardhana Śrī Kumāra Vīra Ballāḷa Hoysaḷa.
Ch. Patna 243	Biṭṭideva, then Viṣṇu, then Viṭṭiga, then Biṭṭu.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the above-mentioned inscriptions in the Hassan district, as well as from others from various districts. In the inscriptions carved under his reign, the king is never called Biṭṭideva alone, but Viṣṇuvardhana Biṭṭiga. The name Biṭṭiga is found in the earliest inscription of his reign but seldom afterwards. Biṭṭideva on the other hand is seldom used after or with Viṣṇuvardhana, but always when the king is mentioned along with his two brothers as sons of Ereyaṅga. In the latter case Viṣṇu is used only once, but it is always used when the king is referred to as a king.

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[43] *EC* 5. (Hassan).

From these conclusions, it must be inferred that Biṭṭideva was the personal name of the son of Ereyaṅga, and that he was called by this name from his birth to his coronation, even while he was minister of his brother Ballāḷa and governor of Tondanur. At his coronation he assumed the dynastic name of Viṣṇuvardhana, to which his personal name of Biṭṭideva or Biṭṭiga was occasionally added to distinguish him from the other Viṣṇuvardhanas of the dynasty, in the same way as his son Viṣṇuvardhana was distinguished by his personal name of Narasiṅgha, and his grand son Viṣṇuvardhana by Vīra Ballāḷa.

The difference between the two names is evident when they are mentioned in the inscriptions of the successors of Viṣṇuvardhana. Many of those inscriptions begin with the usual 'praśasti' or praise of the various ancestors of the king of the moment,with a description of their deeds. In those praśastis, both the names are used. But Biṭṭideva is used only once at the beginning of each when it refers to Viṣṇuvardhana as the son of Ereyaṅga; then while describing his career only, the name Viṣṇu is used in various compounds. All the following inscriptions for instance have Biṭṭideva in the beginning, then in the descriptive part they use:

Belur 112	....	Viṣṇu.
Belur 114	....	Viṣṇunṛpa.
Belur 113	....	Viṣṇubhūpa.
Arsikere 1	....	Viṣṇunṛpa.
Arsikere 17	....	Viṣṇubhūva.
Arsikere 157	....	Viṣṇubhūbūya.

On the strength of the evidence of these inscriptions, we may try to answer the following two questions : Is Biṭṭi a form of Viṣṇu? and, are Biṭṭi and Viṭhṭhala one and the same name? For if only we can establish that Biṭṭi is a form of Viṣṇu, and Viṭhṭhala the same name as Viṭṭi, then it would be possible to conclude that Biṭṭi,is the intermediary form between Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala.

It seems, unfortunately, that Biṭṭi and Viṣṇu are two different names altogether. For if they were the same name, one Sanskrit and the other Kannaḍa, why did the King use them together in his name? The fact that the expression Viṣṇuvardana Biṭṭiga occurs so frequently shows that the second was not the translation of the first. If the king had discarded his first name after his conversion, why did he continue to use it together with his new name? Indeed the legend of the conversion itself contradicts the thesis of the identity of the two names. For, if he changed his name after his conversion how could he choose the same name he had before by putting it only in its Sanskrit form? Finally, several other kings of the same dynasty as well as of other dynasties, the eastern Cālukyas for instance, were also called Viṣṇuvardhana and had never been called Biṭṭideva or Biṭṭiga. The fact that those two names, Biṭṭideva and Viṣṇuvardhana belong to the same king is *a mere coincidence*, and does not imply any connection between those two names.

It seems therefore clear that the thesis of Mr. Khare is not supported by this example. Biṭṭi cannot be an intermediary between Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala.

Nevertheless, it will be extremely useful for our purpose to examine the answer to the second question, i.e. "Are Biṭṭi and Viṭhṭhal the same?" For although it will not link Viṭhṭhala and Viṣṇu, it will be a very valuable clue in our enquiry on the etymology of the name Viṭhṭhala. Our answer is that Biṭṭi and Viṭhṭhala are the same names. Several arguments support this assertion.

The first argument shows the probability of such an identification. There is indeed a striking parallelism between the data given by the tradition, and those furnished by the inscriptional evidence. First, the tradition constantly gives two names for the same king, Viṣṇuvardhana and Viṭhṭhala: on the other hand, the inscriptions no less constantly give also two names for the same king, Viṣṇuvardhana and Biṭṭideva (or Biṭṭiga). Secondly, the tradition makes a distinction between these two names : Viṭhṭhala is used first, and then Viṣṇuvardhana, and the reason of that change is the conversion of the king. On the other hand the inscriptions make also a sharp distinction between the two names: Biṭṭideva (or Biṭṭiga) is used earlier, and Viṣṇuvardhana later, and the reason for that change is the coronation of the king. We can see therefore that, barring the reason for the change, the tradition uses Viṭhṭhala where the inscription uses Biṭṭideva (or Biṭṭiga). There is consequently a strong possibility for the identification of those two names.

The second argument still strengthens that probability. We have seen that there is in the "Divyasūricarīta" the mention of a king ruling over Tirupati called Viṭhṭhala who was converted by Rāmānuja. It is quite possible that this king is no one else than our Viṣṇuvardhana. If this was proved we would not need any other proof of the identification between Viṭhṭhala and Biṭṭideva. As it is, it certainly supports this identification.

The third argument, although not directly connected with the king Viṣṇuvardhana, is however conclusive of that identification. We have several instances in the inscriptions where Viṭhṭhala and Biṭṭi are used synonymously.

One of the best remains of the Art of Vijayānagara is undoubtedly the Viṭhṭhalaswāmī temple at Vijayānagara. This Viṭhṭhala is cer-

tainly the same as the Viṭhṭhala of Paṇḍharpūr, for there is a tradition which clearly connects the two. It is said that the statue of Paṇḍharpūr was brought to Vijayānagara, and that Bhānudās, the ancestor of Eknāth, brought it back to Paṇḍharpūr. This image must have been consecrated in Vijayānagara in the middle of the fourteenth century. Now, when the inscriptions mention that god, they describe it as "the one who dwells on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā." Then, we have an inscription on a copperplate dated 1516 A.D..,[44] the very same year of the construction by the king Kṛṣṇadeva of the celebrated hundred-pillared maṇḍapa in the Viṭhṭhalaswāmī temple, which mentions the god "Who dwells on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā." But the god is not called Viṭhṭhala but Biṭṭaleśwar. We have here a clear identification between Viṭhṭhala and Biṭṭala. Besides, in an inscription dated 1249 A.D.[45] we find the mention of the god Biṭṭeśwar, which is clearly the same name. We then have in the inscriptions the following sequence, Biṭṭeśwar, Biṭṭaleśwar, Viṭhṭhaleswar. Besides the same name is spelt Viṭhaleśvar (1298), Viṭhaleśa (1550), Viṭhaleśvar (1408), Viṭṭhaleśa (1535), and Viṭṭhaleśvar (1540 and 1556).

Several other instances of this identification may be found. In an inscription of 1356 A.D.[46] there are the two names Biṭṭara and Viṭṭhala. In an inscription dated 1326 A.D.[47] Biṭamaṅgala is called Viṭṭimaṅgala where Viṭṭi = Biṭa.[48] In 1158 A.D. a general of Narasiṁha Hoysaḷa consecrated an image of Viṭṭiruṇḍa Perumal which is clearly an image of Viṭhṭhala, where Viṭṭi = Viṭhṭhala.

The last two instances are directly connected with Viṣṇuvardhana. In a Tamil inscription dated 1130 A.D.[49] Viṣṇuvardhana is called Viṭṭiarasa where Viṭṭi = Biṭṭi. Finally a village founded by Viṣṇuvardhana is called after him as Viṭhaladeva-haḷḷi.

All these inscriptions show that *Viṭhṭhala and Biṭṭideva are only two forms of the same name.* The implications of that identification will be examined in our Chapter on Epigraphy. The conclusion reached here is that Biṭṭi is not an intermediary between Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala and the attempt to find this intermediary in the Kannaḍa language must be regarded as a failure.

But if this attempt has failed we must try and see if we can be more successful in searching in other Dravidian languages for the intermediary. The comparison with the derivation of another Marāṭhī word could be very instructive : the Marāṭhī word for 'forced labour' is 'veṭh', which is, barring the vowel, a homonym of 'viṭh' in Viṭhṭhala. This word comes from Sanskrit 'viṣṭi' through the Prākrit form 'viṭṭi' or 'veṭṭhi'. We have here an example of the passage from Sanskrit 'ṣṭ' to Prākrit 'ṭṭh', then to Marāṭhī 'ṭh'. Thus the word Viṭhṭhala if it came from Sanskrit in the usual way would come from a form viṣṭi or viṣṭu : unfortunately Viṣṇu is never written 'viṣṭu' in Sanskrit. But the transformation of the Sanskrit word 'viṣṭi' as it passes into a Dravidian language is interesting. For the Sanskrit 'viṣṭi' or forced labour became, with the same meaning, 'veṭṭi' in Tamil, 'viṭṭi' in Telugu, and 'biṭṭi' in Kannaḍa.

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[44] *EC* 3.115 Mandya).

[45] *EC* 4.20 (Chikmagalur).

[46] *EI* 3.22 ff.

[47] *EC* 10.10 (Kolar).

[48] *EC* 3.52, 62.

[49] *EC* 10. lb, 17.

Now it is well known that the Tamil words in 'viṭṭ' are written in Kannaḍ 'biṭṭ'. Then would not it be possible that Kannaḍa Biṭṭi in the name Biṭṭideva or Biṭṭiga came from a Tamil form in 'viṭṭ'? And as a matter of fact the Tamil transcription of the word Viṣṇu is Viṭṭuṇu or Viṭṇu, for the Tamil alphabet which does not contain the sound 'ṣ' usually turns the Sanskrit 'ṣ' into a 'ṭ'. We therefore could have the following sequence : Sanskrit 'viṣṇu', then Tamil 'viṭṇu', then Kannaḍa 'biṭṭu', then Marāṭhī 'viṭṭhu'. Unfortunately in his dictionary Kittel does not mention 'biṭṭu' as used in Kannaḍa for Viṣṇu, but only 'viṭṭu', the usual tadbhava in Dravidian languages, and those tadbhavas as not generally used, but only in literary works, or in translations from Sanskrit. In Tamil for instance Viṣṇu is very seldom called Viṭṇu, the tadbhava, but Tirumal, Mayin, Naranam, Narayanam. The 'Biṭṭi' of the Kannaḍa inscriptions, which is a very common name and used hundreds of times in the inscriptions, is certainly not a scholarly tadbhava, and it is nowhere attested as such. Thus the sequence Viṣṇu, Viṭṭu, Biṭṭu, Viṭhṭhala although philologically possible is highly improbable.

But one can look at this problem from another and altogether different angle, as Dr. Chatterji did on the one hand, and Mr. Przyluski on the other. According to them, Viṣṇu is not an Aryan name but a Dravidian name which became Sanskritized later on. Thus our problem would be to examine whether both the words Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala could have been derived from a Dravidian root, and if so, our Viṭhṭhala would represent Viṣṇu.

According to Dr. Chatterji,[50] Viṣṇu would come from the Tamil root 'vin', which means the sky, 'ākāśa'. Then, 'viṇṇava' or 'viṇṇo' means the 'celestial ones', those who dwell in heaven, i.e. the devas. Besides 'vindu' means the wind, or the clouds, and it is one of the Tamil names for Viṣṇu. According to this theory, Viṣṇu would be the result of the sanskritisation of a dravidian god, which occurred at the time of the Aryan penetration in India and it would be an instance of the fusion between the two peoples and their religious beliefs. As Mr. Chatterji is himself from Bengal he cannot be suspected of preaching for his own god! But this hypothesis remains a mere hypothesis and as yet unsupported by any historical evidence. If it were to be used in our present enquiry on the etymology of Viṭhobā, it would require proofs to be given that Biṭṭi comes from the Tamil 'Vindu', which seems philologically difficult.

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[50] CHATTERJI, S. K. *Development of the Bengali Language*, p. 41.

With Mr. Przyluski,[51] we enter the domain of brilliant philological synthesis. His first step is to mention all the various names of Viṣṇu which seem to be akin, such are Viṣṇu, Veṭha(dīpa), Viṭhṭhala, Biṭṭideva. Then, leaving aside the form 'Biṭṭi', he reduces all the other forms to their root and thus obtains the following list : 'Viṭh', 'Veṭh', 'Viṣ' and 'Veṣ'.

The permutation i/e can be explained only as coming from a non-Aryan root with a vowel 'e'. For in the words borrowed by the Indo-European language, 'e' could remain only in Middle Indian, while in Sanskrit where 'e' does not exist it was replaced by 'i'. It must be noted to support that view, that 'Veth' and 'Veṣ' are precisely attested in Pāli, i.e. in Middle-Indian.

On the other hand, the permutation t/s, i.e. from a cerebral to a sibilant is a usual phonetic occurrence in all the Austric languages, and is also found in Indian words of a non-Aryan origin. The variations of the last consonant which becomes in turn ṭṭ, ṭṭh, ṭh, ṭhṭh, ḍh, ṣ are in themselves a sure sign of their foreign origin. While words purely Aryan are subject to only limited and well-defined changes, foreign words on the contrary can assume more different forms, which is one of the signs calculated to serve in recognising them.

So, according to Mr. Przyluski, the word which has been transformed in all those various forms from Viṣṇu to Viṭhṭhala would be a pre-Aryan word meaning a pre-Aryan god who was the god of the Deccan. Veṭhadīpa means the country of the Veṭhas, which word in its turn means the sons of the god 'veṭh'. The Andhra kings for instance are called Śatakarṇīs,[52] or "sons of the Horse," which is an 'avatara' of Viṣṇu(?)

A Pāli text seems to support such a conclusion. In the Ghatajataka, we are told that Devagabha had ten sons, i.e. Vasudeva, Bala, Agni, etc. ... and that those sons were known as the sons of 'Andakaveṇhu' which means of the Āndhra Viṣṇu. Such an expression seems to mean that Viṣṇu and the Andhras were of the same race, and it confirms the thesis of Viṣṇu being primitively a Deccani god.

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[51] PRZYLUSKI, J. in *ArO* 4.261. Le Nom du Dieu Viṣṇu et la légende de Kṛṣṇa.

[52] PRZYLUSKI, J. Hippokoura and Satakarni, in *JRAS* (1929), pp. 273 ff.

This hypothesis with all its ingenuity does not seem to be very conclusive for its very foundation is weak. It starts with the assumption that the various names Viṣṇu, Veṭha(dīpa), Viṭhṭha(la), Biṭṭi-(deva), etc. are identical but we have seen that the identity of the last two words with Viṣṇu is very doubtful. Besides, Mr. Przyluski in discarding the form Biṭṭideva ignores one of the oldest existing forms. So it is impossible to make use of his conclusions as an element in our search for the etymology of Viṭhṭhala.

Nevertheless the study of the above-mentioned scholar has the advantage of revealing that Viṣṇu is not an orthodox Brahmanical god. It must be remembered that in the Ṛgveda Viṣṇu occupies a minor position in the Pantheon of Vedic gods. As Prof. R. N. Dandekar[53] says, "He must have been an eminently-worshipped god even in very ancient times; but he must have been put into the background in the Vedic religion on account of some intrinsic characteristics of his primary nature, which may have been disagreeable to the Vedic religious ideology."[54] Those characteristics can be discovered from the very expressions used in the Ṛgveda regarding Viṣṇu, and Prof. Dandekar thinks that they point out to "a god of fertility and productivity,"[55] connected with "uncouth, frivolous, and to a certain extent obscene fertility rituals."[56] But, according to the same writer, "it is not necessary to assume non-Aryan influence in this regard. It was merely a matter of difference between the 'classes' and the 'masses' among the Aryans themselves."[55]

We can now close our enquiry on the question of the derivation of Viṭhṭhala from Viṣṇu. Several authors have assumed that the word Viṭhṭhala was a local form of Viṣṇu but we can see in the light of the above study that *it is altogether impossible to prove that the word Viṭhṭhala is a derived form of Viṣṇu,* through the intermediary Prākrit, or of modern Indo-Aryan language, or of a Dravidian langauge. This leads to the alternative that either there is absolutely no connection between the words Viṣṇu and Viṭhṭhala, or that those names are two different forms of an earlier name of the same god. We will have therefore to discover, according to the first part of the alternative what god was primitively Viṭhṭhala, or, according to the second part, what was the primitive name of that god and whoever he was, a god of the Aryan 'masses' or altogether a pre-Aryan god. But as the answer to those questions does not lie within the domain of etymology, they will be examined in our chapter on the "Origin of Viṭhṭhala."

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[53] DANDEKAR, R. N. *Festschrift Prof. P. V. Kane*, pp. 95-111.

[54] Ibid., p. 95.

[55] Ibid., p. 110.

[56] Ibid., p. 111.

We must end this chapter with a study of what we have called the 'traditional' etymology of the word Viṭhṭhala. We could have called it 'popular', as it is the one accepted by all the worshippers and devotees of Viṭhobā, who, as we have seen, are mostly country-people, if it has not been accepted as well by many Vārkarī writers including the present Vārkarī 'intelligentsia'. The word traditional however is better fitted for this etymology as it explains not only the formation of the word but connects it with traditional account of the very existence of Viṭhṭhala.

Although all the saints, from Jñānadeva onwards did mention in their abhaṅgs the fact that Kṛṣṇa came to Paṇḍharpūr 'for the sake of Puṇḍalīka,'[57] Bahiṇābāi[58] is the first to give a full account of the events which eventually ended in the perpetual presence of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr. Later on we find the legend told by Śrīdhara in his 'Pāṇḍuraṅga Māhātmya',[59] and in Mahipati's 'Bhaktalīlāmṛtita'[60] and 'Pāṇḍuraṅga Māhātmya'. Bahiṇābāi relates how Nārada, during one of his wanderings on earth, was the witness of the extraordinary devotion of Puṇḍalīka for his parents and reported it at once to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Both of them repaired to the place where Puṇḍalīka was performing his duties, but Puṇḍalīka fully engrossed in what he was doing "tossed a brick towards Him, and (the Lord of) Vaikuṇṭha stood on it." Neither Śrīdhara nor Mahipati mentions that Puṇḍalīka threw a brick for Hari to stand on : they say only that Kṛṣṇa stood on a brick, looking at Puṇḍalīka.

Nevertheless, all the poets mention that brick. Indeed they hardly ever mention Viṭhṭhala without adding "who stands on a brick." For instance we read in :

Jñānadeva	—	Viṭho . . . a ubhe kele *viṭevarī.*	(1805)[61]
	—	*viṭe* lāgale yā viṭhobāce pāye.	(1809)[61]
Nivṛttināth	—	brahma he sākāra *viṭe* nīṭa.[62]	
Muktābāī	—	tēci rūpa *viṭe* dekhile āmhī.[63]	
Nāmadeva	—	saguṇa tẽ brahma *iṭevarī* nīṭa	(1714)[61]
Janābāī	—	*viṭevarī* ubhā nīṭa	(1732)[61]
Vita	—	bheṭalā soyerī *viṭevarī.*	
Cokhāmeḷā	—	Puṇḍalīka pete *viṭevarī*	(1822)[61]
Bhānudās	—	To ha viṭhṭhala *viṭevarī*	(1743)[61]
Eknāth	—	Viṭhṭhala ubhā *viṭevarī.*	
Tukārām	—	rūpa te pahāvẽ *viṭevarī*	(1832)[61]

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[57] "Puṇḍalîka varada". [58] Bahiṇâbâi, (Abbot's ed.), pp. 148 ff. No. 466.

[59] Śrîdhara, Pâṇḍuraṅga Mâhâtmya, 2.76 ff. [60] Mahipati, Bhaktalîlâmṛta, 6.86. ff.

[61] Numbers in brackets refer to the "Olice Abhaṅga".

[62] SAKHRE, B. N. *Gâthâpancaka*, p. 34, No. 221. [63] Ibid., p. 317, No. 1.

For the Vārkarī, this brick has a mystical significance. Viṭhobā's feet are resting on it and thus bestows on it a unique holiness. It bears the divine footprints and enjoys His trampling. It thus became the symbol of the Vārkarī, of the devotee who surrenders completely to god, who lovingly suffers himself to be trampled by Him, who keeps the marks of God carved on his heart. To become a brick, in the Vārkarī terminology, means to devote oneself body and soul to Viṭhobā. In a mystical poem Jñānadeva thus says :

(Vārāṇasī yātre jāīna)

1.

I shall go to Benares,
I shall see the sacred waters of Prayāga,
I shall bathe in the Triveṇī,
But I shall not become a brick there.
I shall become this solid brick,
Under the feet of Viṭhobā.

2.

I shall go to the feast on the Godāvarī,
I shall pick up the fruits of the eleven varuṣas,
I shall bathe in the Abjaka,
But I shall not become a brick there.

3.

I shall go to Mallikārjuna's feast,
I shall see the huntsmen of Śrī Śailom,
I shall bathe in the Pātālgaṅgā,
But I shall not become a brick there.

4.

I shall go to Kolhāpur's festival,
I shall see Mahālakṣumī,
I shall bathe in the Vichālā,
But I shall not become a brick there.

5.

I shall go to Mātāpūr's Festival,
I shall see the Sahyādri ranges,
I shall bathe in the Gajanagaṅgā,
But I shall not become a brick there.

6.

I shall undergo hard mortifications,
I shall take the beggar's bowl,

I shall surrender my body to the saw,
But I shall not become a brick.

7.

Nivṛttidās says :

On account of my deserving exertions,
I put myself under the feet of Viṭhobā,
I shall not become a brick anywhere else.

This constant association of the name Viṭhṭhala with the word brick 'vīṭ', led the popular mind to wonder if this 'vīṭ' was not the root of Viṭhṭhala who in that case would mean 'the one who stands on a brick'. 'Viṭh-ṭhala' would have come from Sanskrit 'viṣṭi-sthala' : 'viṣṭi' or 'iṣṭi' means brick in Sanskrit, and 'sthala' would mean to stand erect. However there are some difficulties in the way of this solution. First, if Viṭhṭhala means 'who stands on a brick', why did all the poets feel the need to add, 'viṭevarī' which means 'on a brick.' Secondly, although there is no difficulty about the derivation of 'vīṭ' which obviously comes from the Sanskrit 'viṣṭi' the derivation of 'ṭhal' is doubtful. 'ṭhal' with the meaning of "who stands erect" does not exist anywhere else in Marāṭhī. That means that 'viṭ-ṭhal' could not be a Marāṭhī creation, as one part of the word is not Marāṭhī. It then could only be a tadbhava for an already composed word iṣṭi-sthala, which is attested nowhere. Finally Sanskrit 'sthala' never meant "who stands erect" but "place, spot, solid ground etc." The Sanskrit word which means "standing" is 'sthāna' which gives in Marāṭhī 'ṭhana' as in Paiṭhana. Thus, 'thala' certainly does not come from 'sthāna', and if it comes from 'sthāna', and if it comes from 'sthala', it does not make sense.

It seems that this traditional etymology has been suggested by the constant association of the god Viṭhṭhala with the brick thrown to him by Puṇḍalīka and that it must definitely be considered as a 'popular' etymology.

The conclusion of this review of the various solutions given to the problem of the etymology of Viṭhṭhala seems clear enough. *There is no philological connection between Viṭhṭhala and Viṣṇu* although according to the tradition Viṭhṭhala is an avatāra of Viṣṇu, being Kṛṣṇa. There *is no philological connection between Viṭhṭhala and the Marāṭhī word 'vīṭ'*, although Viṭhṭhala does stand on a brick. But *there is a definite connection between the word Viṭhṭhala and the Kannaḍa word Biṭṭi.* Philologically, Viṭhṭhala comes from the Kannaḍa Bitti, through a form *viṭṭi,* viṭṭhi, viṭhṭhi, all attested in inscriptions. Who was that Biṭṭi? This will be the subject of our chapter on the 'Origin of Viṭhṭhala'.

CHAPTER VII

ICONOGRAPHY

Usually, in India, the characteristic features of an image are fixed, and it is possible to give it a name according to the various positions of the limbs, or the weapons or ornaments it holds. It should therefore be possible to recognize from the iconography of the Paṇḍharpūr image of Viṭhṭhala the various characteristics belonging to him. On the other hand, *the date of the image would help us to determine the date of the origin of the cult at Paṇḍharpūr.* It is therefore necessary to make a thorough study of the Paṇḍharpūr image, as well as of other ancient images of Viṭhṭhala. We must then compare the iconography of those images, with the iconography of images of other deities to see if we can find any connection between Viṭhṭhala and any other god, and obtain a clue regarding the nature as well as the origin of Viṭhṭhala himself. But, before beginning this iconographical study, it will be very useful for the following interpretation of the various sculptural features of this image, to know how the Vārkarīs themselves see Viṭhṭhala, and how they describe him in their poems.

The first and universal characteristic of the image is, as we have seen, that the god is standing on a brick. It must be remembered that all the poets without exception have mentioned the brick on which Viṭhobā stands.

The second characteristic of the statue is its erect posture. There are in Hindu iconography many positions possible for a god: standing, squatting, sitting, reclining on a couch, and so on. All those positions have a special significance but the peculiarity of Viṭhṭhala image is that it is never represented except in the erect posture. The usual Marāṭhī word for this position is 'ubhā', erect. Another word is 'nīṭa' which means straight. In spite of the description given in the "Paṇḍuraṅgāṣṭaka" by a certain Śankara, none of the Vārkarī poets ever described the image as 'tribhaṅga', this familiar and gracious posture of so many Indian sculptures where the body is bent in three successive directions. On the contrary the words they all use can only mean an erect and straight standing position.

This erect position is still emphasised by the position of the feet which are 'samacaraṇa' i.e. on the same level and flat on the brick.[1]

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[1] *O* 21.

One of the main characteristic features of the image is the position with the arms akimbo, with the hands resting on the hips. "Karakaṭavarī ṭhevūniyā" says Tukārām[2] and Niḷobā "kaṭi kara",[3] Nāmdev mentions ' 'kaṭi ṭhevunī kara."[4] Janābāi "Kara ṭheunī kaṭavarī",[5] Eknāth "katāvarī kara ṭhevī ",[6] etc..... However, it is not uncommon to find the expression "Catur-bhuja" in some of the poems. This word means literally "four-armed", and it refers to Viṣṇu. When applied to Viṭhobā it is meant to be expressive of his divine power and of the fact that he is an 'avatāra' of Viṣṇu, than to be description of the image itself.

There is no unanimity concerning the objects that Viṭhobā holds in his hands. Sometimes they are described as empty and simply resting on the hips, sometimes as holding the "kaṭisūtra" or the chain around the hips, sometimes holding the 'Śaṅkha' and the Cakra, sometimes even the four symbols of Viṣṇu, the Cakra, the Saṅkha, the Gadā and the Padma. It seems that as those objects are symbols of various divine powers, the poet attributes these symbols to the god according to the powers with which he wishes to invest the god. Such attribution therefore is not to be taken literally.

Contrarywise, there is unanimity in describing Viṭhobā as a child. The image is called Bālārūpa in many abhaṅgs (Tukā. I. P. 3170, Cokhā 0.80 and 0.81, Eknāth 0.45, Nāmā 0.1673 etc....). This childlike appearance is expressed by many adjectives, like 'sukumār' (delicate like a child), 'bālarūpa gojirē (pretty form of a child). Tukārām uses a very expressive adjective 'nāgargoḍē' which means a boy "who runs about naked." (Tukā. I. P. 2387). Sometimes indeed the child Viṭhobā is called 'ughaḍā' which means naked or at least clad only in a loin-cloth (Tukā, I. P. 1110), or 'digambara' which means absolutely naked and which is the term applied to one of the two sects of Jainas precisely because they go about naked. (Eknāth 0.54, Tukā, I. P. 2387). But more often he is described as wearing a 'pītāmbara' i.e. a yellow silk garment around his hips (Tuka, I.P. 4) (Niḷo. 0.8) (Nāmā 0.21).

The poets naturally like to describe the various ornaments and trinkets that adorn the image of Viṭhobā, but their imagination is limited to a certain number of traditional ornaments, viz. the Tulasīmāḷā, or necklace of Tulsi beads; 'makara-kuṇḍalē', the earrings shaped like a fish; 'kaustubhamaṇi', the jewel Kaustubha obtained out of the churning of the ocean and characteristic of Viṣṇu, 'vaijayantīmāḷā' or the necklace of Viṣṇu made of the five precious stones (diamond, ruby, topaz, pearl and sapphire), 'brīdacā toḍara' a specific anklet, and a few other trinkets. The headgear called 'mukuṭa' a kind of tiara is often mentioned but never described and barring one doubtful expression of Jñānadeva, there is never mention of a 'liṅga' on the mukuṭa.

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[2] *O* 1.

[3] *O* 12.

[4] *O* 24.

[5] *O* 27.

[6] *O* 35.

Finally, the poets give to the image a very definite colour which is dark-blue. The various expressions, 'nīla', 'śyām', sāvaḷā' 'ghana-nīḷa' or cloud-dark, refer to the same dark shade of blue, and it would be inaccurate to translate them by "fair" although they are characteristic of handsomeness.

Tukārām in one of his abhaṅgs gives us a graceful description of the image of Pāṇḍuraṅga :

(Sundar te dhyāna ubhē viṭevarī)[7]

1.

Beautiful is the image standing on a brick,
with his hands upon his hips.

2.

On his neck is a Tulasī wreath
On his loins a yellow silk garment
This image is my everlasting delight.

3.

The fish-shaped pendants sparkle at his ears,
The jewel Kaustumbha shines at his neck.

4.

Tukā says :
Herein is all my pleasure :
I will contemplate his face with love.

In another abhaṅg, Tukārām gives an explanation of the various characteristics of the image :

(Nāgara goḍē bālarūpa)[8]

1.

The form of the dark God
is a naked small boy.

2.

He came due to attachment for Puṇḍalīka,
in the company of cows and cowherds.

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[7] *O* 1.

[8] *IP* 2387.

3.
Full of grace is this image,
naked with his hands on his hips.

4.
Silently as if not knowing anything,
Remained standing for the love of devotion.

Standing with even feet on a brick,
He does not affect hypocritical courtesy.

6.
His hands are placed simply on his hips,
He carries his meal of curds and rice.

7.
On his back are his fife and his flute
In his hand the Black one held a stick.

Niḷobā on the other hand describes the jewels and ornaments with which the God of Paṇḍharpūr was adorned. (0.11).

(Muguṭa Kuṇḍale vanamālā)

1.
Wearing a Mukuṭa, earrings, a sylvan garland,
The forehead marked with musk and saffron,

2.
The body smeared with sandal,
I have had the vision of Viṭho.

3.
He looks handsome with his jewelled bracelet,
and his yellow silk garment round his hips.

4.
Around his loins shines the triple string
His arms and ankles tinkle with rings.

5.
The shining beauty of his face
is like the full moon.

6.
Niḷā says :
Charming is the beauty of his limbs,
when he stands with his hands on the hips.

In spite of some discrepancies in the details of the ornaments and trinkets which adorn the image of Viṭhobā, the descriptions given by the various Vārkarī poets are, regarding the main features remarkably unanimous, as if these poets had before their eyes a very definite and vivid image. We will find the same uniformity in the many ancient images of Viṭhobā to be found in various places of Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka, as if all were the reproduction from a unique original the main characteristics of which had to be reproduced exactly, leaving limited scope for the artists' imagination. Our study of those various images must begin with the statue of Paṇḍharpūr.

According to Mr. KHARE's description, in his book on Paṇḍharpūr[9]: "The image is standing. It has on the head a "topi" which on account of its height and its mouldings has some likeness with the headgear of the Parsis. We can call it a 'mukuṭa', but of the simplest kind. The pujārīs call it a Śivaliṅga and the mouldings 'śiṅkyācī dorī', but they do not look like a trinket."

"The face itself is rather short but looks elongated due to the height of the topi. The cheeks are handsomely round. From the ears fish shaped pendants hang down. Those are so long that they rest on the shoulders and seem to be a shoulder ornament. Round the neck, the necklace called Kaustumbha is carved. On the left and right breast there are respectively a hole on the first and a ring on the other : the hole is called 'śrīvatsalañchana' and the ring *'śrīniketaṇa'*. Round the arms a little above the elbows are a double ring and a bracelet of pearl.

"The left hand holding a sea-conch is resting on the hips. The right hand open and the thumb turned towards the ground support the stalk of a lotus, and rests on the right hip. The end of this short stalk hangs down upon the thigh. There is a 'mekhalā' (a three-stringed belt) round his hips : the loose ends of this belt hang down below the penis and the testes which are clearly visible. The moulding of stone between the two legs is called the stick, 'kāṭhī'. There is no trace of garment around the loins, nevertheless some think that there is such a garment and in that case the 'kāṭhī' could be a fold of the robe which would extend up to the feet. The feet rest on a parrallelepiped called the "thirty bricks". Under the bricks there is an inverted lotus. There is no 'prabhāvaḷ' (a silver plate) behind the image, but after the breaking of the image at the hands of a śaiva gosāvī the right leg was restored and a strong support built to strengthen it."

From the above description we can extract the following characteristics of the image :

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[9] KHARE, 2.17.

1. — The image is standing.
2. — The image has only two hands.
3. — The hands are resting on the hips.
4. — The left hand holds a sea-conch and the right a lotus.
5. — The legs are straight and parallel.
6. — The feet are flat on a "brick".
7. — The Mukuṭa is a cylindrical shape with a moulding round it.
8. — The image is apparently naked and the genitals are visible.

Without entering into the discussion here concerning the age of this image (which we will do later on), we may say that it may be dated about the sixth century A.D. The image is not a piece of art. Compared with many other images of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa of a later period it looks rough and primitive. The features of the face are conventional and artless.

Several ancient images of Viṭhobā are available and it is necessary to give a brief description of their main features before entering into the comparative study of the image of Paṇḍharpūr. To avoid repetitions, the serial number of each characteristic in the descriptions of the following images corresponds to the number given in the description of the Paṇḍharpūr image : 1. — Standing position. 2. — Number of arms. 3. — Akimbo position. 4. — Symbols held in the hands. 5. — Position of the legs. 6. — Position of the feet. 7. — Mukuṭa. 8. — Dress. 9. — Ornaments. We must first consider two images described by Mr. H. K. SASTRI in his book on South Indian Iconography. The first was found at Ahobalam in the Kurnool district of the Madras State. Its characteristics are follows :

1, 2 and 3 — as in the Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — The left hand holds a kind of purse and the right one a sea-conch.
5 and 6 — As in the Paṇḍharpūr image.
7. — The mukuṭa is high and cylindrical.
8. — The image is clad in a 'dhotar' which reaches the feet.
9. — The ornamentation is elaborate and heavy. The dhotar folds between the two legs and forms the "stick".

The image which shows a better craftsmanship than the one of Paṇḍharpūr is nevertheless not very artistic. The main difference with the latter is that here it is the right hand and not the left which holds the sea-conch, and that the left hand holds a purse instead of a lotus. The second image described by Mr. SASTRI is found at Tirupati the famous centre of pilgrimage dedicated to Śrī Venkateśvar Bālājī. Its main features are as follows :

1 and 2 — As in the Paṇḍharpūr image.
3. — The two hands touch the hips.

4. — The left hand holds a sea-conch, the right one is open and empty in the posture 'varada mudrā'.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — The feet are hidden up to the knee by a lotus.
7. — The mukuṭa is cylindrical and surmounted by a knob.
8. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
9. — The ornamentation is sober. There is the sacred thread.

This image is certainly the more graceful of the three mentioned above. The main difference with the Paṇḍharpūr image lies in the huge pedestal from which the image seems to emerge, in the middle of an open lotus flower. Although the right hand does not hold a lotus stalk, one can be seen behind the hand, carved on the right side of the image. The image clearly represents a child.

In his booklet on Paṇḍharpūr, Mr. KHARE mentions two other images which have the merit of being very old, but of which the identification is somewhat doubtful due to their dilapidated state. The first was found in the Jogeśvarī cave near Bombay and in the neighbourhood of the admirable caves of Kānherī.[10] Its main features are as follows :

1. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
2. — Although the arms are missing it is possible to infer from the thickness of the shoulders and from the position of the left hand still visible on the left hip, that the image had only two arms.
3. — The left hand holds a sea-conch. The right one is missing.
4. — The legs, from the knees downwards are missing, but the position of the thighs shows that they were straight and parallel.
8. — The image is clad in a dhotar and adorned with several trinkets among which is a long curled lock of hair on his chest.

The cave where this image stands dates from the eighth century A.D. The second image mentioned by Mr. KHARE is in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay,[11] that comes from the Elephanta caves and would date from the second quarter of the eighth century.

1. — The image is standing, but all the upper part of the body, from the waist is missing.
2. — The arms are missing.
3. — The left hand which holds a sea-conch is resting on the hip.
4. — The right hip does not bear any trace of hand.
5. — The legs are straight, parallel and slightly apart.

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[10] Ibid., 2.18,9.

[11] Ibid., 2.19.

6. — The feet are flat on the ground, without any "brick".
8. — The image is clad in a loin-cloth skin-tight reaching the knees. The genitals are apparent under the garment.
9. — The only ornament is a large belt with a big loop hanging down in front of the thighs.

Due to the dilapidated state of this image, its identification with Viṭhobā is doubtful. The main difference with the other images is that this one is flanked by two small figures on either side, a female attendant to the right, and a kuberalike dwarf to the left.

There is also in Mr. KHARE's booklet a picture of an image of Viṭhṭhala which reproduces the picture given by Mr. C. N. RAO in the Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference publication.[12] According to Mr. RAO, this statue found by him among the ruins in the Viṭhṭhalaswāmī temple at Vijayānagar, would be the image belonging to that temple. Unfortunately what is left of it does not support very much the identification of that statue with Viṭhṭhala. There are no hands visible on the hips, the feet are broken as well as the arms and the head.

We are now going to describe several images which have not been described in iconographical works as yet, and which may thus offer some new material for our investigation. The first one is found in Paṇḍharpūr itself in a temple which dates from 1618 A.D.[13] Because this image is called 'svayambhu' it is supposed not to have been made by human hands. This most probably means that it was rediscovered in 1618 after having been hidden and forgotten for generations : and is therefore almost certainly much older than the temple itself. Its main features are as follows :

1, 2 and 3 — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — The left hand holds a sea-conch, and the right one, open in varadamudrā is holding something which could be a lotus stalk.
5, 6 — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
7. — The head is surmounted by a cylindrical headgear without any ornamentation.
8. — The image is naked and the genitals are visible.
9. — A simple belt is round the hips and the bell-shaped end of which is hanging down between the legs.

This image is devoid of art and extremely rough and even more so than the one in the great temple. The features of the face are exagge-

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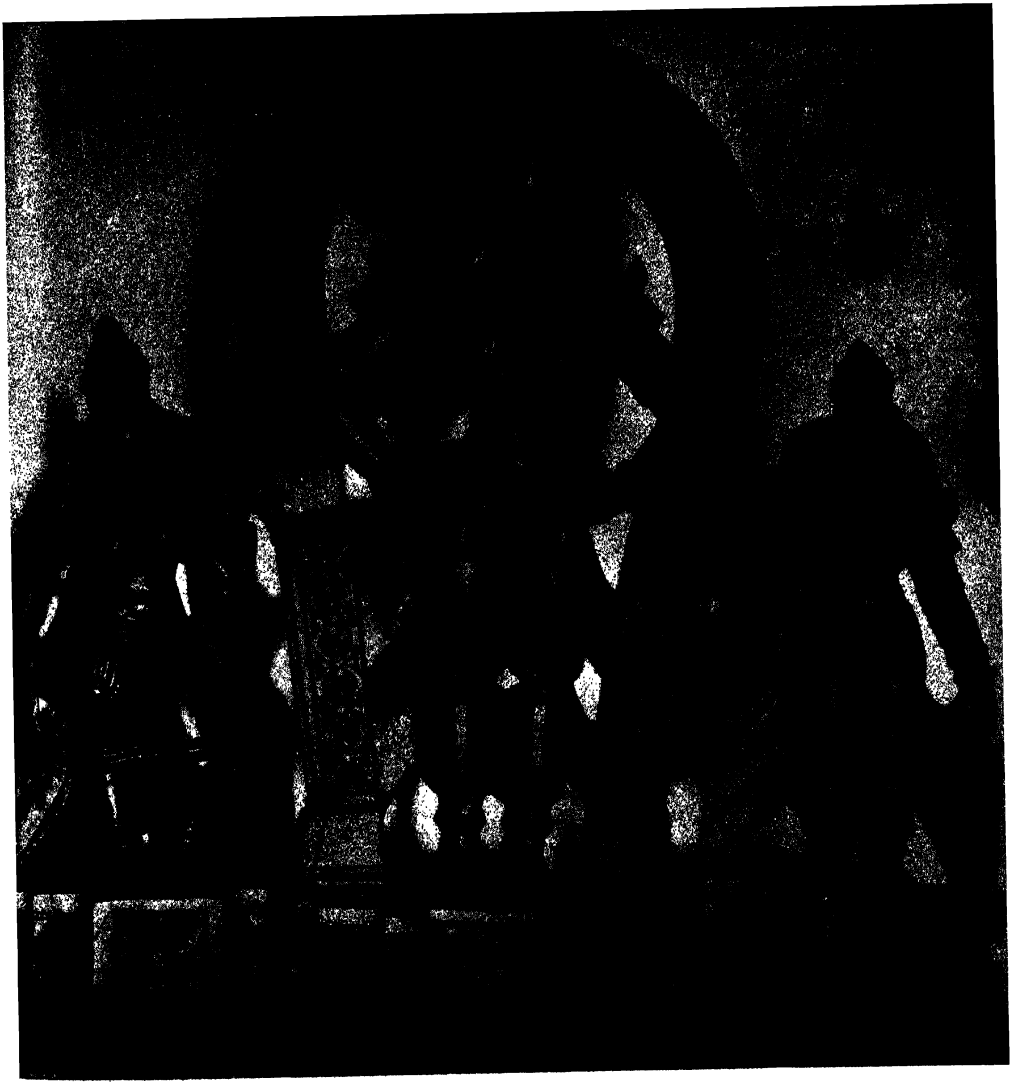
[12] NARAYANRAO, C. An identification of the Idol of Viṭṭhala in the Viṭṭhala temple at Hampi, in *AIOC* 8.715.

[13] *BG* 20.455. : Tâkpiṭhya Viṭhobâ.



Viṭhobā in Hoskoṭe Temple (Bangalore dt. 1735 A.D.)

Viṭhobā in Kolhāpūr Temple (late 12th century) rated and ugly. There are no ornaments. It is a Viṭhṭhala image reduced to the bare main characteristics.

Another image of Viṭhobā is found in a Kolhāpūr temple dedicated to that god and built in the Hemāḍpantī style towards the end of the twelfth century A.D. It is very interesting as most of the Hemāḍpantī temples of that time having been destroyed by the Muslim invasions, it is one of the few images of Viṭhobā which dates from that time and is carved in that style. The temple was probably a Jain temple before being converted into a Viṭhṭhala temple. Its main feature are as follows :

1 and 2 — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
3. — The two hands are touching the hips.
4. — The left hand holds a sea-conch, the right one is open as in the varada-mudrā.
5 and 6. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
7. — The mukuṭa is conical.
8. — The image is clad in a loin-cloth covering the upper part of the thighs and elaborately decorated : several tufts hang down from the belt between the legs.
9. — The image is adorned with many jewels and trinkets. A broad wreath passes over the left shoulder and hangs down before the legs in a large loop. The headgear is unlike that of Paṇḍharpūr image. There are two female attendants on both the sides of the image, but they are carved out of separate blocks.

An image of Viṭhṭhala is found carved on the external wall of the north cell of the Mallikārjuna Temple at Basrāḷ in Mysore.[14] The main cell of that temple contains a 'Liṅga', while the north and south cells respectively contain Narāyaṇa and Viṣṇu. The carvings of that wall, in the best Hoysaḷa style, consist of the six usual rows of sculpture, then above them a row of larger images separated by small pilasters. One of those statues is Viṭhobā. Its main characteristics are :

1 and 2. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
3. — The two hands nearly touch the hips.
4. — The two hands are holding by the collar what look like small pots or bags.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — The two feet rest flat on the pedestal without a brick.
7. — The mukuṭa is conical.
8. — The image is clad in a heavy 'dhotar' covering the legs up to the feet and a folding hangs between the legs (the "stick").

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[14] *MAD* (1934), p. 42.

The main differences with the Paṇḍharpūr image are the two bags held in the hands instead of the sea-conch and the lotus and the stiff heavy dhotar instead of the light-skin tight loin-cloth.

Also dating from the same period (thirteenth century A.D.) another image of Viṭhobā is found among the sculptures of the external wall of the fourth cell in the Pañcaliṅga temple at Govindanahaḷḷi in Mysore. Its main features are :

1, 2, and 3. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — The hands are holding two bags like those of the last image described but inclined sideways.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — There is no brick under the feet.
7. — The mukuṭa is conical.
8. — The image is clad in a long 'dhotar' covering the legs up to the ankles. A succession of tufts hangs down from the belt between the two legs.

This image is very like the Basrāḷ image but in a less skillful and in a more heavy style.

There is at Muḷbāgal in the Kolar district[15] a temple dedicated to Viṭhṭhala and built under the Vijayānagara kings, in the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. It is one of the few images of Viṭhobā carved in the Vijayānagara style, and one of the finest among all the Viṭhobā images. Its main features are :

1 and 2. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
3. — The two hands touch the hips.
4. — The left hand is holding a sea-conch and the right one is open as in the varada-mudrā.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — The feet are resting flat on the pedestal.
7. — The 'mukuṭa' is cylindrical and surmounted with a knob.
8. — The image is naked and the genitals of a young boy are clearly visible.
9. — The ornamentation is very simple. At the 'mekhalā' are tied two small flat bags resting on the thighs.

This image which has all the characteristics of the Paṇḍharpūr image, by its elegance as well as by the jewels carved on it, is the one which corresponds best to the description of the infant-god as given by the Vārkarī poets.

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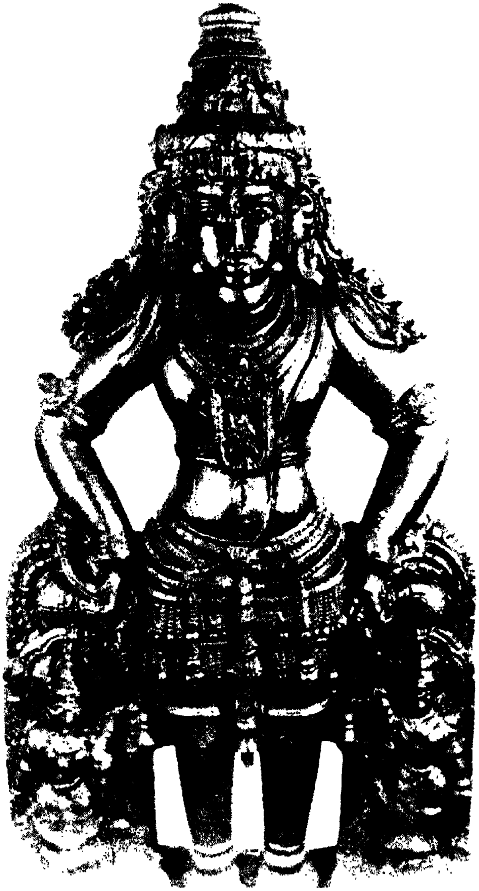
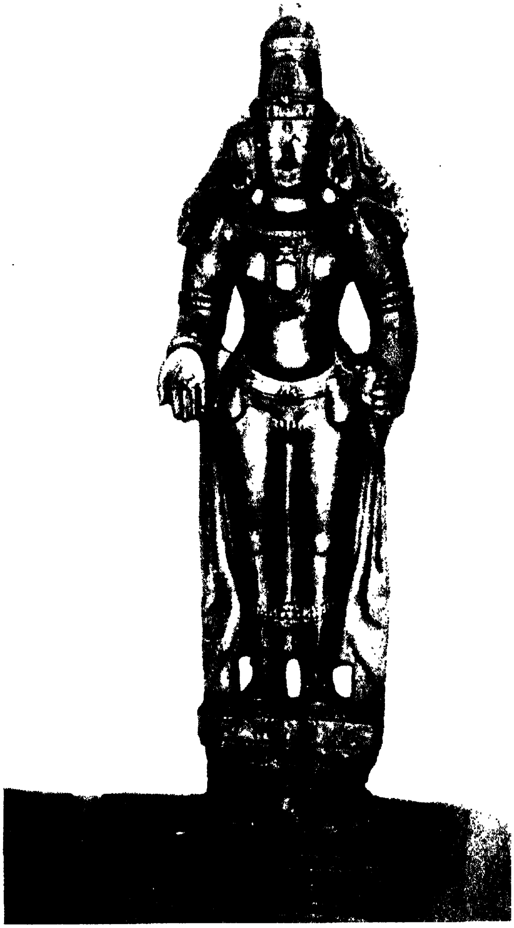
[15] *MAD* (1945), pp. 36,7 and Pl. II.2.

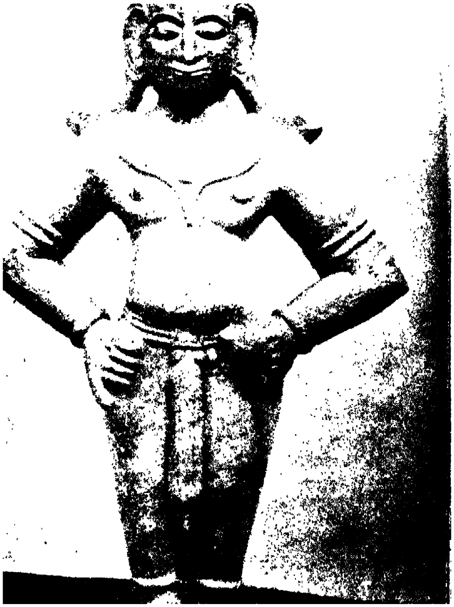
Viṭhoba in Kāḍur Temple
Mysore State, 16th century)



Viṭhobā in Kophoḍi Temple.
(Thāṇā dt., Local modern art)



Viṭhobā in Muḷbāgal Temple
(Kolar dt., Mysore State.
Early 16th century)



Takpiṭhyā Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr
(1618 A.D. (?))

Another image of the sixteenth century is found in the north cell of the Chenna-Keśava temple at Kadūr in Mysore.[16] Its main features are :

1, 2 and 3. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — The two hands are holding a kind of horizontal bag or bunch of flowers.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
7. — The mukuṭa is elaborately carved and surmounted by a knob.
8. — The image is clad in a heavy dhotar adorned with a long tuft which hangs down between the two legs.

The image clearly represents a young boy : there is no sea-conch or lotus in the hands.

An image of Viṭhṭhala of the eighteenth century A.D. is found in a temple at Hoskoṭe in Bangalore district.[17] It was carved in Poona in 1735 and sent to Hoskoṭe, at the request of the Peśwā. Its main features are:

1, 2 and 3. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — The two hands are empty, in Kaṭigamudrā.
5 and 6. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
7. — The mukuṭa is bell-shaped and surmounted with a knob.
8. — The image is clad in a 'dhotar' which covers the legs up to a little below the knees. A long tuft hangs between the legs.
9. — There are many jewels and trinkets.

This image is flanked by two female attendants which however do not belong to the same block as the main image. The main difference with the Paṇḍharpūr image is in the position of the hands.

We must finally mention two images which are remarkable for their striking difference with the Paṇḍharpūr original. The first is to be found in a small temple in the neighbourhood of Khopoḍī in the Thāṇā district. The temple is not an old building and the image does not appear to be very old either, but it is a type of local sculpture. The aspect is that of a stone cylinder where a head and two arms in akimbo have been roughly carved. A statue of a similar type may be seen also in a temple at Wai in the Satara district. The second image is a small statuette which belongs to the Archaeological Museum of St. Xavier's College in Bombay. It is a modern affair in brass, but the striking detail is that on the top of the mukuṭa there is a 'liṅga' with its 'śāluṅkā.

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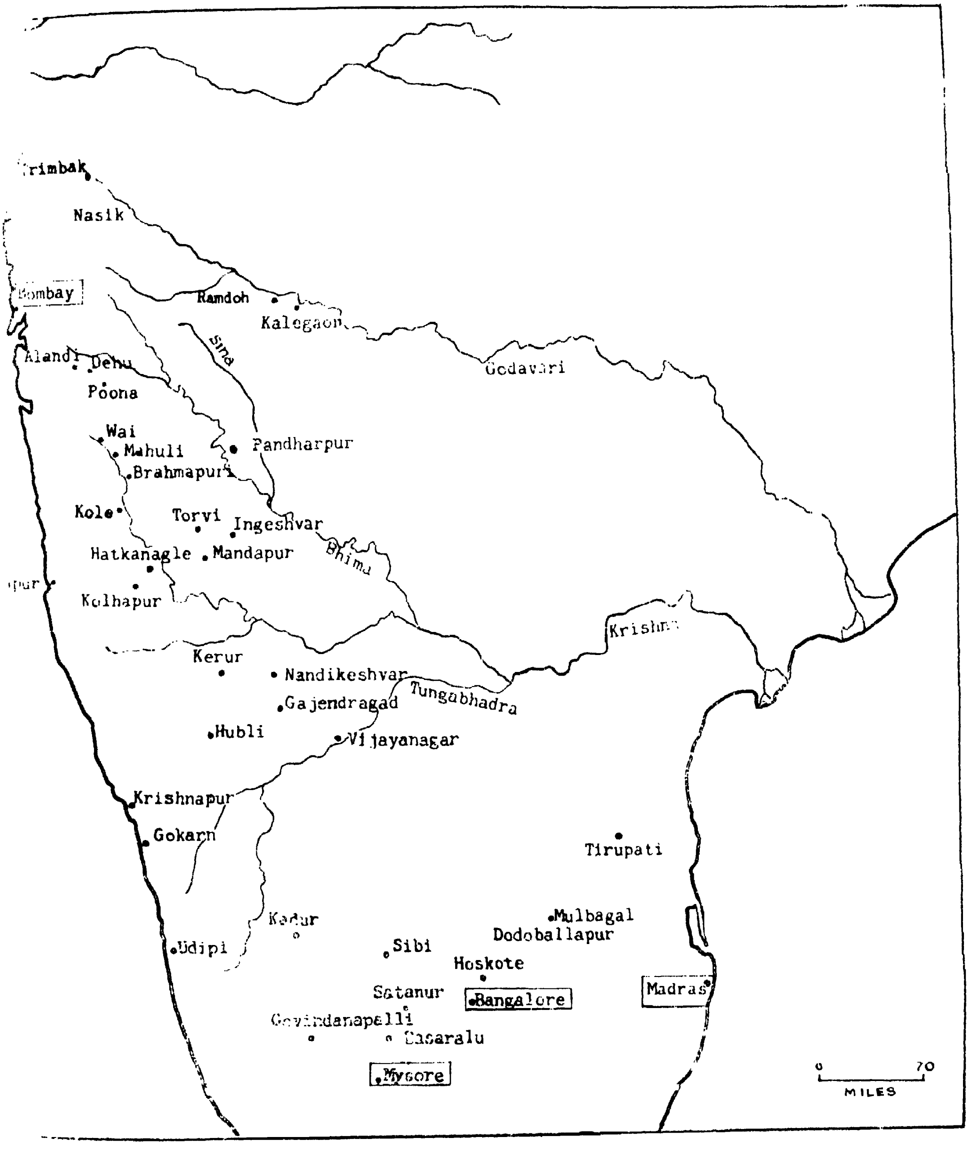
[16] *MAD* (1944), p. 27 and Pl. III.4. [17] *MAD* (1941), p. 70 and MG 5.177.

Besides the few images mentioned above there are many others to be seen in various parts of Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka, but most of them are recent. We can now infer from all the images we have described the main characteristics that an image of Viṭhobā must have:

1. — It must be standing, and as such belongs to the class of samapada-stanaka images.
2. — It must have two arms and they must be in akimbo position.
3. — The two hands must rest on the hips, or at least touch them.
4 — The left hand must hold a sea-conch and the right hand must either be in varada-mudrā, or hold a lotus stalk.
5. — The legs must be straight and parallel.
6. — The feet must be on the same level and rest on a small platform called a 'brick'.
7. — The mukuṭa must be high, either cylindrical or conical.
8. — The image must be clad in a skin-tight loin-cloth or dhotar, but the genitals must be apparent.
9. — The image may be adorned with various jewels like long pendants hanging up to the shoulders and resting on them, necklace, a jewel on the breast, a triple belt with the ends hanging down, bracelets and anklets.

The chronology of the above mentioned images covers a long period of more than a thousand years, through which the main features have been preserved with a remarkable consistency. The earliest image appears to be the one of the great temple of Paṇḍharpūr together with the one called Tākpiṭhyā, both dating perhaps from the sixth century A.D. Then would come the images found in the caves of Jogeśvarī and Elephanta in the eighth century A.D. and then the Karnāṭaka group consisting of the images at Basrāḷ, Govindanahaḷḷi, Bhadrāvatī, Nagalapura, as well as the one of Kolhāpūr, in the twelfth century A.D. The images of Kaḍūr, Muḷbāgal and Tirupati would date from the Vijayānagar period. Then the one of Hoskoṭe would represent the Peshwā period.

Not only does the chronology of the images cover a long period but the location of the various images covers a wide area of the country also and it stretches from Bombay to Tirupati and from Paṇḍharpūr to the Cauvery. The occurrence of other images (not described here) in Karnāṭaka at Bhadrāvatī, Dod-Ballapūr, Sibi etc.....supports the fact that the cult of Viṭhobā was not limited to Mahārāṣṭra but extended over the whole of Karnāṭaka, specially under the Hoysaḷa and Vijayānagar kingdoms, i.e. even before the Marāṭhas with Śahājī got a hold over some part of Karnāṭaka.


Trimbak
Nasik
Bombay
Ramdoh
Kalegaon
Sina
Alandi
Dehu
Poona
Godavari
Wai
Mahuli
Pandharpur
Brahmapuri
Kole
Torvi
Ingeshvar
Hatkanagle
Mandapur
Bhima
pur
Kolhapur
Krishna
Kerur
Nandikeshvar
Tungabhadra
Gajendragad
Hubli
Vijayanagar
Krishnapur
Gokarn
Tirupati
Kadur
Mulbagal
Udipi
Sibi
Dodoballapur
Hoskote
Satanur
Bangalore
Madras
Govindanapalli
Casaralu
Mysore
0
70
MILES

Geographical extension of the cult of Viṭhobā

Hoskote - - - place where there is a temple of Viṭhobā

There are two problems with which a comparative study of the image of Viṭhobā is concerned: the first is to discover the genesis of that image and thus its approximate age and the second to ascertain the relation between the characteristics of the image and those of other images and subsequently to interpret them. As those two problems are closely interconnected, it will be necessary to consider them together at each step of our enquiry.

The similarity between the image of Viṭhobā and some sculptures found in the caves of Udayagiri hill near Bhilsa has been often mentioned.[18] But only recently with the publication of a study on those caves with many illustrations, has accurate material been made available to corroborate this opinion. In 1948 Dr. D. R. PATIL published a booklet entitled "The Monuments of the Udayagiri hill". It is on the basis of the information taken from that book that the following observations are possible.

In the caves of Udayagiri, several images of Viṣṇu have been found, in particular a standing Viṣṇu represented in five caves, namely in caves No. 6, No. 10, No. 11 and No. 12.[19] The best preserved are the two of cave No. 6. They are carved on the external wall of the cave, to the right and to the left of the entrance. Following the same pattern which has been used in the description of Viṭhobā's images, we find that the main features of these two statues are as follows:

1. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
2. — The image has four arms, the two front arms in akimbo posture, the other two unnaturally bent in order to hold weapons.
3. — The two hands of the front arms are touching the hips.
4. — The right hand of the front arm is probably holding a lotus and the left a sea-conch. The two other arms are holding respectively a Cakra and a Club.
5. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
6. — The feet are on the same level, but no trace of "brick" is visible.
7. — The headgear is cubical, the top part being slightly broader than the lower part. A kind of crown is carved on it.
8. — The image is clad in a very tight dhotar which barring the long fold between the legs is hardly noticeable.
9. — A heavy garland passes behind the neck, then over the shoulders, beneath the forearms, and falls in a large loop in front of the knees. There is a triple girdle around the loins, the two ends falling over the two thighs.

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[18] *BG* 20.424-30. and KHARE, 2.25.

[19] PATIL, D. R. *The Monuments of Udayagiri Hill*, pp. 34 ff.

From the above description we can point out the similarities and the differences between these images and the Paṇḍharpūr image. According to Mr. KHARE there is no similarity at all. First the Udayagiri images have four arms whereas the Paṇḍharpūr image has only two, which is true enough. But one thing must be noted: The two arms of the Udayagiri images[20] which are not akimbo are holding the Cakra and the Club. It is therefore very likely that what the two arms in akimbo are holding are the sea-conch and the lotus, although it is difficult to be definite, on account of the state of the images. The Paṇḍharpūr Viṭhobā also holds the sea-conch and the lotus but the two rear hands are absent.

But although some of the characteristics are similar in both the images, it must be said that the style and the detail of the ornamentation are absolutely different. The two statues cannot belong to the same school of art. Mr. KHARE[21] has noted that the treatment of the mukuṭas is not the same in the two cases. The mukuṭa of the Udayagiri images is very plain: a cylinder on which a kind of crown is carved. It belongs to the early Gupta style. The mukuṭa of the Paṇḍharpūr image is much more elaborate, taller with a moulding at the bottom and a knob at the top. Mr. KHARE thinks that they may be compared with the mukuṭas of the images belonging to the Kushan period. But from the examples of the images in the Mathurā and Lucknow Museum we cannot find any ground for such a comparison. Indeed the style of the mukuṭa is much more like the Pallava style of the seventh century A.D., as seen in Mamallapuram.

It looks therefore impossible to conclude from the few similarities existing between the two images to an identification, as the late Pandit Bhagavan Lal Indraji has done in his description of the Bombay Gazetteer: according to him, the Viṭhobā image is very much like the Udayagiri one; as we know that the Udayagiri image is nothing but the Hari form of Viṣṇu according to Hindu iconography, the learned scholar holds that we can safely state that Viṭhobā is nothing else than Hari; literary evidence, he says, supports that view.[22]

The weakness of that contention lies in the first statement: as we have seen, the two images have but few similarities. What is more, those very similarities concern aspects that are by no means characteristic of Hari. "Whether", wrote Dr. H. D. Sankalia, "we follow the Rūpamaṇḍana or the Pātala-Khaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa, or even the Viṣṇudharmottaramahapurāṇa (3.47), Hari, who is the 23rd among the

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[20] Ibid., and see Pl. 10.

[21] KHARE, 2.25.

[22] *BG* 20.423,4. and PANCHAMUKHI, R. S. Abhaṅga-Viṭṭhala of Paṇḍharpûr, in *JUB* 21.1.1,6.

24 forms of Viṣṇu, has always four arms, the back right and left hands hold the cakra and padma, and the front right and left śankha and gadā respectively. The Padmapurāṇa prescribes śankha and cakra, and gadā and padma, respectively. Of these we find only padma and śankha in the Paṇḍharpūr image and in the most ancient images, open hand in varada-mudrā and śankha. It is true that the Viṣṇudharmottara (3.64), and after it Hemadri in his Caturvarga Cintāmaṇi (Vratakhaṇḍha, 1.111) describe a form of Viṣṇu with two arms only, but they are holding gadā and cakra. Thus even if we regard it as a two-armed Viṣṇu, the symbols are not after the generally accepted form of Viṣṇu as Hari, or of Viṭhobā." [23]

However, our opinion is that *it is impossible to discover the age of the image of Viṭhobā through comparison of style.* For, as we have seen, this image is not a work of art. It is not the work of an artist who could belong to one school of sculpture or the other. It has been done by a local craftsman according to local tradition .Such workers produce even today sculptures which are like those of a thousand years ago. In many other countryside temples such images can be found which have been carved few years ago. The fact that it is certainly not of the Hemaḍpantī style shows that the image might have been carved long before the Hemaḍpantī temple was built at Paṇḍarpūr in the thirteenth century. The statue might have been carved when Paṇḍharpūr was only a tiny village, with a small shrine. Nevertheless the possibility remains, as the image does not belong to the Gupta style, that it was carved even after the Muslim invasions in order to replace a former image.

But the study of the image may produce all the same a very valuable contribution to the interpretation of the various characteristics. Without aiming at discovering a possible affinity between the Paṇḍharpūr image and others, we may search in Hindu iconography for other images more or less similar, and see if there is any connection between the deities represented by such images and Viṭhobā.

The first observation to be made is that although the tradition sees in Viṭhobā a form of Kṛṣṇa, no *image of Kṛṣṇa has any similarity with any image of Viṭhobā* and vice-versa, that nothing in the various characteristics of Viṭhobā's image is indicative of Kṛṣṇa barring perhaps the fact that Viṭhobā's is represented as a young boy, and Kṛṣṇa is usually represented as a child. But there are many other infant-gods in India such as Venkateśa, Subrahmaṇya, Skanda and so on.

There are two sets of images which bear some similarity with Viṭhobā's, those of Harihara and Sūrya as we can see from the pictures of some of the Harihara images reproduced in the book of Mr. K. SASTRI,[24] or in the catalogue of the Prince of Wales Museum.[25] The Harihara image illustrated in the Catalogue is particularly interesting as it comes from Purandhara. Its only difference from the Viṭhobā image is that it has four arms, but two of them are more or less akimbo, and the left part of the image is Viṣṇu (sea-conch), while the right one is Śiva. The Harihara images are usually standing ones with stiff and parallel legs. It must be remembered that Niḷobā[26] in one of his abhaṇgs describes Viṭhṭhala as 'Harihara' and Nivṛttināth[27] says that "Puṇḍalīka brought to Paṇḍharī Śiva with Viṣṇu". It is also traditionally said that the mukuṭa of Viṭhobā is a Śivaliṅga.

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[23] SANKALIA, H. D. Viṭṭhala and Hari, in *JUB* 21.4.10. See also : GOPINATH RAO, T. A. *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* 1.1.229-32.

Sūrya is also very often represented standing stiff legged and sometimes has only two arms. One hand is often in varadamudrā. Sūrya also very frequently assumes the weapons of Viṣṇu, specially the sea-conch and the Cakra and sometimes also only lotuses.[28]

Attempts have been repeatedly made to identify Viṭhṭhala with the Jaina Tirthaṅkara Neminātha, on iconographical grounds:[29]the contentions advanced are that (1) Viṭhobā is represented as naked and so are all the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras, and (2) Viṭhobā holds the sea-conch, this is also the 'lāñchana' of Neminātha.

These contentions are fallacious. (1) Viṭhobā is not represented as entirely naked, except in a few images as in the Kaḍūr-temple. In fact the Paṇḍharpūr image most probably has a loin-cloth although it is not very clearly discernible. He certainly is adorned with many ornaments and a 'mukuṭa' whereas according to the Jaina canons a Tīrthaṅkara image must be absolutely naked and without any ornaments or headgear,[30] (2) As regards the sea-conch, although it is the 'lāñchana' or emblem of Neminātha it is never found held in his hand and indeed cannot be so represented as once again it is contrary to Jaina canons. Moreover no Jaina image is ever found with arms akimbo. On the contrary when a Jina is represented in the 'kāyotsarga' or standing position the arms hang down straight along the sides of the body without touching it.[31]

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[24] SASTRI, H. K. South Indian Images, p. 128.

[25] ACHARYA, J. V. *Catalogue in the Prince of Wales Museum*, p. 22.

[26] Nilobâ (O 12) : "Harihara under the one form stands with his hands on his hips". Nâmdev (O 18) : "Harihara virañcî śrîmûrtî".

[27] *O* 2012.

[28] SASTRI, South etc...., pp. 237,8. See also the Sûrya image in the Victoria and Albert Museum. See COOMARASWAMI, A. K. *History* etc...., Pl. 22. and MONOD-BRUHL, O. *Indian Temples*, Pl. 60.

[29] CHOPADE, T. K. *Paṇḍharpûrcâ Viṭhobâ.*

[30] BHATTACHARYA, B. C. *Jaina Iconography*, p. 32.

Mr. A. R. KULKARNI is of the opinion that the image of Viṭhṭhala is that of the Buddha, because (1) the image stands alone without any consort whereas the custom is that any representation of Viṣṇu always has at his side Lakṣmī, (2) Viṭhṭhala has no weapons and position of the hands is the usual one of a sannyāsī, and finally (3) the colour of the 'dhotar' of Viṭhṭhala is golden, which is also the colour of the garment of the Buddha.[32] These arguments are very weak : (1) Viṭhṭhala, although represented alone at Paṇḍharpūr is elsewhere very often shown with Rukmiṇī. Moreover Buddha is not the only one to be represented alone and there are many temples in which Viṣṇu, Rāma or Śiva also stand alone: (2) Viṭhṭhala does have a weapon, the sea-conch, which is a battle-horn, powerful in frightening the enemies: It is indeed very seldom that Viṭhṭhala is represented without anything in his hands. Besides we do not know of any image where the Buddha has his arms akimbo. (3) Admittedly the dhotar of Viṭhṭhal is yellow, 'pīta', but ochre and not yellow is the usual colour of the sannyāsī's garment. Moreover the image of Viṭhobā is not painted and so the description of the yellow dhotar can only be a literary description and is not borne out by the actual Viṭhobā image anywhere. *Therefore nothing can warrant the identification of Viṭhṭhala with Buddha.*

We have seen from these various comparisons that the main difficulty in identifying Viṭhobā with any other god or saint is the position of the arms. And precisely this is one of the main characteristics of a Viṭhobā's image : "iṭhi para ṭhāyi kaṭi para hāt". Is there in Hindu iconography any other instance of an image with arms akimbo? There are indeed very few, and it clearly demonstrates that it is a unique characteristic of Viṭhobā. Although as we have noted, Buddha himself has never been represented with arms akimbo, there are some other buddhist sculptures showing the arms in that position. FERGUSSON in his standard book on "The Cave Temples in India" gives a photograph of a tympanum of the Ananta cave at Khaṇḍāgiri near Kaṭak.[33] In the centre of this tympanum is a sculpture of Śrī with arms akimbo. Such images occur also at least ten times at Sāñcī, once at Bhīlsā, once at Bārhut and so on. "It is not clear" says he, "whether it is the Goddess of Wealth or the wife of some fabled previous 'avatāra' of Viṣṇu .... She is so far as I can ascertain the only 'person' who was worshipped by the Buddhists before the Christian era, but her worship by them was, to say the least, prevalent everywhere." Here the arms akimbo certainly express a beneficent attitude i.e. Śrī giving wealth to her devotees. But there is a long way from this goddess to Viṭhṭhala, and it is difficult to imagine any connection between them.

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[31] Ibid., p. 187. See also SASTRI, *South* etc...., p. 265.

[32] KULKARNI, A. R. *Paṇḍharicā Viṭṭhala*, No. 5.

[33] FERGUSSON, J. and BURGESS, J. *The Cave Temples of India*, pp. 71,2.

Another instance, much more interesting, is the representation of Avalokiteśvara, also a Buddhist sculpture. Several pictures of this Bodhisattva may be found in M. de MALLERMAN's book, [34] as well as in those of FERGUSSON,[35] and COOMARASWAMI.[36] There is specially a scene,[37] depicted in sculpture of the VI and VII century and found only in Mahārāṣṭra where Avalokiteśvara is standing on a lotus, practically naked, with legs straight and parallel, the right hand in abhayamudrā or in varadamudrā, the left hand holding a lotus or a water-vessel. This image is certainly a beneficent form of the Bodhisattva for it is the illustration of the twenty-fourth chapter of the "Lotus" or 'Saddharma puṇḍarīka' where it is said that whatever the peril in which one happened to be, if one prayed to Avalokiteśvara, his prayer was sure to be granted. Afterwards Avalokiteśvara became the main deity when his image began to be represented as erect on a lotus, holding in his left hand a padma and in his right a rosary. He wears no ornaments, nor the Brahmanical thread but only a 'jaṭāmukuṭa'.

The water-vessel called Kamaṇḍalu "which is always held in the left hand," (like Viṭhobā's sea-conch) is the oldest attribute of Avalokiteśvara.[38] It looks very much like the objects that the image of Viṭhobā in Hoysaḷa style is holding in its hands. In only one image of Akalokiteśvara, says M. de Mallermann, there is a sea-conch and that too in the right hand. "It is, according to us, the only instance of syncretism between Viṣṇu and Avalokiteśvara.[39]

On the other hand, the lotus is a very distinctive feature of Avalokiteśvara. Besides, the more common 'mudrā' represented in these images is the 'varadamudrā' : "from the eighth century A.D. onward the 'varadamudrā' becomes the constant posture of the right hand."[40] (In most of the representations of Viṭhobā, the right hand of the image is also in 'varadamudrā').

We can see from these quotations that *some of the characteristics of an image of Viṭhobā tally with those of a representation of Avalokiteśvara.* The water vessel, still in existence on the earlier representations of Viṭhobā (in the Hoysaḷa style) could have been replaced in the course of time by the sea-conch of Viṣṇu. The lotus, and the varadamudrā of the right hand remained unchanged. Nevertheless there are two important differences which make identification between these two gods difficult : (1) an image of Avalokiteśvara is characterised by the small representation of the Buddha carved on his Jaṭāmukuṭa. In no image of Viṭhobā such a representation is found. (2) The main characteristic of an image of Viṭhobā is the position of the two arms akimbo. In spite of an image of Avalokiteśvara as dvārapāla found in one of the Bagh Caves which, according to the illustration given in M. de Mallermann's book, seems to have the arms akimbo, no other image of Avalokiteśvara has the arms in such a position. Therefore, in spite of some striking similarities and of the fact that Avalokiteśvara was specially popular in Mahārāṣṭra, some more proofs would be needed to affirm an identification between the two gods.

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[34] MALLERMANN, M.de, *Avalokiteshvara*, pp. 136 ff.

[35] FERGUSSON-BURGESS, *The Cave* etc.... pl. 55.

[36] COOMARASWAMI, *History* etc...., Pl. 164.

[37] MALLERMANN, *Avalokiteshvara*, pp. 230 ff.

[38] Ibid., p. 266.

[39] Ibid., p. 274.

[40] Ibid., p. 263.

Roughness of style and arms akimbo are two features found in the primitive art of the Āhīrs of Bihar, and there is *a striking similarity between some of the images of Bir Kuar and the rougher images of Viṭhobā,* such as the one found in the temple near Khopoli (near Khaṇḍālā). Bir Kuar has been described in the abundantly illustrated book of Mr. W. G. ARCHER *"The Vertical Man"*.[41] He is the caste-god of the Āhīrs in West Bihar, he is also a cattle-god specially connected with the buffaloes. He is most probably the deification of an Āhīr hero, killed in protecting his herd of buffaloes against cattle thieves or tigers. He is actually identified with Kṛṣṇa. We shall study the legends connected with this god in our chapter on the Origin of the cult of Viṭhobā. We are here only concerned with its iconographical peculiarities. The striking features of those images is that Bir Kuar is nearly always represented with arms akimbo, whether he is holding a club in his right hand, or whether his hands merely rest on his hips. The main features of these images are :

1, 2 and 3. — As in Paṇḍharpūr image.
4. — Sometimes the two hands are empty, sometimes the right hand is holding a club.
5. — The two legs are straight, parallel and slightly apart.
6. — The two feet are resting flat on the ground, but without any "brick".
7. — There is no head-gear.
8. — The image is naked, and the genitals are often apparent.
9. — The ornaments consist of a necklace of beads, a girdle, and sometimes bracelets and anklets.

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[41] ARCHER, W. G. *The Vertical Man*, pl. 6,9,11,15,20,21 etc....

We can see from this description that all these characteristics are like those of Viṭhobā, although the Bir Kuar images are much cruder than the Paṇḍharpūr image, giving the impression that the latter is but an elaborate form of these more primitive sculptures; moreover Viṭhṭhala as well as Bir Kuar is actually considered a form of Kṛṣṇa.

Bir Kuar was a Āhīr hero killed in protecting his herd : in that connection it is to be noted that many 'vīrgals' (memorial stones commemorating the death of a hero) have carved on them figures with arms akimbo. Such stones have been found in many parts of Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka, and around Wai, for instance, we have observed on those stones pairs of figures, the male figure with his left hand akimbo and his right directed upwards and the female figure with both the arms akimbo. These stones occur sometimes also as 'sati' stones, i.e., erected in memory of the self-immolation by the wife of the dead hero.

In conclusion we may state that the various characteristics of the image of Viṭhobā are very unusual according to Hindu Iconography. The only sign by which we can recognise such an image as a representation of Viṣṇu or of Kṛṣṇa is the sea-conch, and the various jewels might have been added afterwards to the two-armed image of Viṭhobā. But the main features in themselves are absolutely unlike any other representation of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. The identification with an image of the Buddha or of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkara Nemināth are very doubtful. The only similar images which could be compared with Viṭhobā's image are those of the Buddhist goddess Śrī, the Boddhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Bir Kuar, and the personages on 'vīrgaḷs'. It seems nevertheless clear that the position of the arms akimbo expresses the idea of a beneficent god who bestows on his devotees material or spiritual blessings :

"Puṇḍalīka varada Hari Viṭhṭhala".

CHAPTER VIII

EPIGRAPHY

In the chapter on Etymology, various hypotheses concerning the derivation of the name Viṭhṭhala were examined. They however give only theoretical possibilities. Such theories, to be conclusive, must be supported by epigraphical evidence. In the present chapter an attempt is made to give a chronological history of the name Viṭhṭhala, according to the various inscriptions in which it occurs to see if any conclusive solution can be given to the problem of the derivation of this name.

The word Viṭhṭhala may be divided into two parts: a root 'viṭhṭha', and a suffix 'la'. As Viṭhṭhala is also often written Viṭṭhala, we must look into the inscriptions for mentions of these two roots.

The earliest word that could be connected with Viṭhṭhala is the name Jayadviṭṭha mentioned in the inscription of 516 A.D. already examined in the sixth chapter of this thesis, if we could see in it the compound 'Jayad-viṭṭha': but the correct separation of this name is, as we have seen, 'jayad-dviṭṭha', which has no connection whatsoever with the word Viṭhṭhala.

It is in an inscription of 808 A.D. that we find, for the first time, the mention of the root 'viṭṭha'. This inscription,[1] the so-called Rādhanpūr inscription of Govinda III Rāṣṭrakūṭa, records the gift made by this king of the village of Rattajuna (the modern Ratajan in Ahmadnagar district) to Parameśvarabhaṭṭa, a brahmin of Tigārī, for the purpose of keeping up the so-called five sacrifices. Among the owners of the village of Rattajuna there are two brahmins respectively called 'Viṭṭhuduvejha' and 'Viṭṭhapu' where the root 'viṭṭhu' or 'viṭṭha' is clear. The inscription is written in Sanskrit.

Thus, in 808 A.D. we do not find as yet the mention of Viṭṭhala, but only the mention of its root 'viṭṭha'. Nevertheless this could be a link between the name Viṭhṭhala and the Sanskrit Viṣṇu, because people in general, and brahmins in particular are called after brahmanical gods, and who could be this 'Viṭṭhu' if not a local form for Viṣṇu ? *The problem is then to find a link between Viṣṇu and Viṭṭhu.*

We have seen that the Prākrit form of Viṣṇu is Veṇhu or Viṇhu. However a phonetic law discovered by Prof. Jacobi could explain the passage from Viṣṇu to Viṭṭhu. Jacobi says that in the Vedic time, at the time of the formation of the various Prākrits, the Sanskrit double letter 'ṣṇ' underwent a special transformation in some cases and a dental was inserted between 'ṣ' and 'ṇ' so that the name Viṣṇu became Viṣṭṇu. That dental becoming the strongest of the group, the 'ṣ' finally dropped and Viṣṇu became Viṭṇu. This Viṭṇu could have given our Viṭṭhu. The successive transformations of the name would thus follow this order, Viṣṇu — Viṣṭṇu — Viṭṇu — Viṭṭhu.

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[1] *EI* 6. 239.

It is however extremely doubtful that such an evolution although phonetically possible did happen in the case of our Viṭṭhu. First, the phonetic law discovered by Jacobi has not been generally accepted by scholars for there are more exceptions than cases where the law is observed. We cannot therefore use it as an argument without historical confirmation that such a law was observed in the case of Viṭṭhu. Then this transformation took place at the time of the formation of the Prākrits, and 'Viṭṭhu' is mentioned only in 808 A.D. and this means that more than a thousand years divide this transformation from its after-effect. As in the intervening period there is no mention of the form viṣṭṇu or viṭṇu in the many Prākrit inscriptions of the Deccan, we can safely conclude that it is impossible to explain the form 'viṭṭhu' by the law of Jacobi.

Moreover, a closer examination of the inscription itself can show us another and more likely line of explanation. Dr. Kielhorn in his report on the inscription says that its language is Sanskrit "but for some proper names from the Southern vernaculars". And he mentions that 'Viṭṭhuduvejha' and 'Viṭṭhapu' are among those names, which are probably those of the owners of the village. They are :

Anantaviṣṇubhaṭṭa.
Viṭṭhuduvejha.
Goindamma
Savvaibhaṭṭa.
Chandadibhaṭṭa
Kunthanagaibhaṭṭa.
Madhavaniyappu
Viṭṭhapu.
Devanaiyyabhaṭṭa.
Reyaiyyabhaṭṭa.

These names are obviously of a Kannaḍa origin for their suffixes are typically Kannaḍa: 'iyya' for instance is, according to Dr. SANKALIA[2] a "purely Kannaḍa suffix", as also 'amma' and 'appu'. It is thus clear that Viṭṭhuduvejha and 'Viṭṭhapu' are names of Kannaḍa formation. Who is then the god after whom they are called? If it is Viṣṇu, we must prove that 'Viṭṭhu' is the Kannaḍa form of Viṣṇu. The evidence of the inscription itself seems to go against such a hypothesis, for among these very names mentioned by Kielhorn as coming from a southern vernacular, there is one called after Viṣṇu and where Viṣṇu is written in its original Sanskrit form: the name Anantaviṣṇubhaṭṭa comes in the inscription just before the name Viṭṭhuduvejha. If 'Viṭṭhu' was Viṣṇu written in Kannaḍa, why should the name of the same god be written in two different ways in two names of the same linguistic origin ?

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[2] SANKALIA, H. D. *Historico-Cultural Ethnography of Gujarat,* p. 117.

We stated, from the evidence of the inscription itself that 'Viṭṭhapu' was a Kannaḍa name. Such a statement is confirmed by the evidence of many other Kannaḍa inscriptions. Viṭṭhapu or Viṭṭhappa is a well known Kannaḍa name, but it seems to have been used only towards the end of the fourteenth century to become common during the fifteenth century. At that time the name is written 'Viṭhṭhappa' or 'Viṭṭhapa' or 'Viṭhappa'. There is however in an inscription dated 1125 A.D. the mention of a man called Viṭṭhapa' which seems to be the same name as 'Viṭṭhapa' thus establishing the existence of the name at the beginning of the twelfth century. The 'Viṭṭhapu' of our inscription would thus be the earliest mention of that name.

The Rādhanpur inscription opens still another line of investigation. We are told by Kielhorn that in the script used in this inscription the consonants 'v' and 'b' are written with the same character. 'v' and 'b' are phonetically very near, and the passage from one to the other is fairly frequent. But this occurrence has in the present case an interesting consequence, namely that the names 'Viṭṭhuduvejha' and 'Viṭṭhapu' should perhaps be read as 'Biṭṭhuduvejha' and 'Biṭṭhapu', and indeed this spelling must be the correct one as these names are Kannaḍa, and in Kannaḍa 'b' is always preferred to 'v'. (for instance, in an inscription dated 117 A.D., Viṣṇu is written Biṣṇu). It becomes then clear that these names belong to the same group as the numerous 'Biṭṭappa', 'Biṭṭeya, Biṭṭiga of Kannaḍa inscriptions. To discover the origin of the names 'viṭṭhuduvejha' and 'viṭṭhapu' it is therefore necessary to investigate the history and the meaning of the Kannaḍa names above mentioned. It must be remembered that *we reached the same conclusion at the end of our examination of the name of King Viṣṇuvardhana Hoysaḷa,* also called Biṭṭideva and Viṭṭhaladeva.

In Kannaḍa inscriptions we found several forms for this name : the more common are biṭṭi, biṭṭa, beṭṭi, beṭṭa. What is the meaning of those words? In his dictionary, Prof. KITTEL mentions the word 'biṭṭi' meaning "forced labour", but it is difficult to see any connection between this word and the name of a god.[3] Another word mentioned in his dictionary is 'beṭṭa' meaning "a hill'.[4] It may seem that the word for "hill" could hardly have any relation with the name of a god. However the following observations will show that such a relation is not altogether impossible.

'Beṭṭa' in Kannaḍa means "hill". There are several other words with the same meaning, namely 'durga', 'giri', 'adri', 'guḍḍa', 'guṇḍu', etc., most of them are of Sanskrit origin. Is there any difference between those words ? Several hills have two names, one local with 'beṭṭa' and the other Sanskrit with 'giri'. Still 'beṭṭa' seems to be used for a special kind of mountain. If we look in the Mysore Gazetteer[5] for names of the hills called 'beṭṭa', we will find a dozen of them, for instance Hebeṭṭa, Sitibeṭṭa, Perbeṭṭa, Harihareśvarabeṭṭa, Bileśvarabeṭṭa, Bhasmāsurabetta, Gopalaswāmībeṭṭa, Chennakeśavabeṭṭa, Bhāṅgāranāyakabeṭṭa, etc., There are many more 'giris' or 'durgas' than 'beṭṭas'.

Now, all those hills called 'Beṭṭa' have a common feature: all are holy hills,[6] many of them are surmounted by temples, and some have sacred caves. A very interesting characteristic is that those hills are called after the name of a demon. Sometimes this demon had according to local legends a terrible fight with Śiva or with Viṣṇu, or with both, and was destroyed at the end or became a worshipper of those powerful gods. Those demons most probably represent pre-Brahmanic gods who were superseded by the Brahmanic gods and in many cases became those called Kāla-Bhairava. A. K. COOMARASWAMI seems to have misinterpreted the word 'beṭṭa' when he says : "The term beṭṭa is applied to a special form of shrine consisting of a courtyard open to the sky with cloisters round about and in the centre a colossal image, not of a Tirthaṅkara but of a Saint."[7] But the confusion between the word meaning "hill" and the name of the temple built on it is easy to understand.

'Beṭṭa' therefore means a hill consecrated to some pre-Brahmanic deity. It is a very old Kannaḍa word and unlike its synonyms 'giri', 'durga', or 'adri', it is definitely not a Sanskrit word. We find the first mention of the name in Ptolemy's Geography. The Greek geographer (c. 140 A.D.) says: "74. In like manner the parts under Mount BETTIGO are occupied by Brakhmanai Magoi as far as the city of Batai."[8] It is to be noticed that as early as the second century A.D. the word 'beṭṭa' was already connected with some religious significance. It is moreover probable that this Beṭṭiga did not mean only a hill, but the god presiding over that hill as it was also the name of a people, and it would seem odd that a man would be called 'hill'. It was used commonly as a personal name.

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[3] KITTEL, F. *Kannada-English Dictionary*, p. 1114.

[4] Ibid., p. 1136.

[5] HAYAVADENA RAO, C. *Mysore Gazetteer*, (*MG*) vol. 5, passim.

[6] *MG* 5.324, 369, 370, etc.

[7] COOMARASWAMI, A. K. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 118.

[8] *Ptolemy's Geography*, edited by NOBLE.

In a lythic inscription dated 189 A.D.[9] we find the name 'biṭiga' as the name of a man. Then there is no inscriptional evidence of that name until the seventh century A.D. when there is an eastern Cālukya called Biṭṭarasa in an inscription[10] dated 618 A.D. In the eighth century, an inscription dated 750 A.D.[11] mentions a village called 'beṭṭinapūr' in Gangadeśa. Three inscriptions of the ninth century mention people called after the same name: there is a Nal-gāvuda called 'biṭṭiga' in Sorab (Śimoga) in 800 A.D.[12] some brahmins of the village of Rattajjuna in Ahmadnagar[13] called 'biṭṭhu' and 'biṭṭhapu' in 808 A.D., and a man called 'biṭṭiga in Dharwar in 869 A.D.[14]

Several inscriptions of the tenth century A.D. mention that name:

950 A.D. — Biṭṭiga[15]
951 A.D. — Beṭṭa Kaḍavūr, a village.[16]
955 A.D. — Biṭṭiga, a nal-gāvuṇḍa (in Sorab).[17]
958 A.D. — Buṭuga, a Ganga King (?)[18]
963 A.D. — Beṭṭuga, a nalgāvuṇḍa. (Śimoga).
964 A.D. — Biṭṭiga, a nal-gāvuṇḍa. (in Sorab).
965 A.D. — Biṭṭiga, an ur-gāvuṇḍa. (in Sorab).
967 A.D. — Biṭṭiga, a nal-gāvuḍa. (in Sorab).
979 A.D. — Biṭṭiga, a nal-gāvuṇḍa. (in Sorab).
990 A.O. — Buṭesvara (the Ganga king also called 'Buṭugai).

Six out of these ten inscriptions are found in the Sorab Taluka of Śimoga district, a very hilly country. Six of the people referred to in those inscriptions were petty officers in some villages, and they died while fighting against cattle-thieves. 'Vīrgals' were erected to commemorate this event. These Biṭṭigas' were all Brahmins.

The inscriptions where the name 'biṭṭiga' is mentioned in the eleventh century are :

1012 A.D. — Biṭṭi gāvuda.[19]
1070 A.D. — Biṭṭiyaṇṇā.[20]

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[9] *EC* 3. Ng. 198.
[10] *EC* 8. Ap. 547.
[11] *EC* 4. Hg. 4.
[12] *EC* 8. Sb. 542.
[13] *EI* 6.241.
[14] *SII* 11.13.
[15] *EI* 8.234.
[16] *MAD* (1935), p. 126.
[17] *EC* 8. Sb. 202.
[18] *EI* 4.280.
[19] *EC* 6. Ck. 38.
[20] *EC* 7. Sk. 62.

1077 A.D. — Biṭṭimayyā.[21]
1088 A.D. — Beṭṭa gāvuṇḍa.[22]
1094 A.D. — Biṭṭimayyā.[23]
1098 A.D. — Biṭṭayyā.[24]

Out of these six inscriptions, four are found in the Śimoga district, one in Kadur and one in Hassan which means in a hilly country.

The twelfth century is extremely rich in inscriptions mentioning the word 'biṭṭi' :

1100 A.D. — Biṭṭiga (the Hoysaḷa king).[25]
1103 A.D. — Biṭṭimayyā.[26]
1116 A.D. — Beṭṭavaṇī.[27]
1117 A.D. — Biṭṭideva.[28]
1117 A.D. — Biṭṭiyaṇṇā and Biṭṭideva.[29]
1125 A.D. — Beṭṭanāyaka.
1132 A.D. — Beṭṭakalideva.[30]
1140 A.D. — Biṭṭimayyā.[31]
1143 A.D. — Biṭṭiseṭṭi.[32]
1150 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.
1156 A.D. — Biṭṭa Vardhanadeva.[33]
1158 A.D. — Beṭṭahalli.[34]
1160 A.D. — Biṭṭeya.[35]
1161 A.D. — Biṭṭiyaṇṇā.[36]
1162 A.D. — Biṭṭabovā.[37]
1164 A.D. — Biṭṭamara Gauṇḍana.[38]
1165 A.D. — Biṭṭa gauṇḍa.[39]
1167 A.D. — Biṭṭimayā.[40]
1170 A.D. — Biṭṭeyaṅge.[41]
1174 A.D. — Beṭṭarasa.[42]
1175 A.D. — Biṭṭeyur.[43]
1175 A.D. — Biṭṭimeya.[44]

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[21] *EC* 7. Sk. 44.
[22] *EC* 5. Cn. 189.
[23] *EC* 7. Sk. 94.
[24] *EC* 7. Sk. 178.
[25] *EC* 6. Kd. 164.
[26] *EC* 7. Hn. 66.
[27] *EC* 6. Cm. 100.
[28] *EC* 11. Dg. 166.
[29] *EC* 5.. Ak. 56.
[30] *EC* 5. Ak. 45.
[31] *EC* 7. Sh. 37.
[32] *EC* 8. Sb. 125.
[33] *EC* 5. Hs. 151.
[34] *EC* 3. Sr. 62.
[35] *EC* 7. Sk. 78.
[36] *EC* 5. Bl. 193.
[37] *EC* 5. Bl. 176.
[38] *EC* 12. Tk. 46.
[39] *EC* 6. Mg. 20.
[40] *EC* 3. Ml. 9.
[41] *EC* 8. Sg. 116.
[42] *EC* 1.74.
[43] *EC* 7. Sk. 75.
[44] *EC* 3. My. 8.

1179 A.D. — Biṭṭeya.[45]
1180 A.D. — Beṭṭavur.[46]
1184 A.D. — Beṭṭa.[47]
1185 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.[48]
1186 A.D. — Biṭṭiyaṇṇā (Spelt also Biṭṭeyaṇṇā and Biṭṭaya).[49]
1189 A.D. — Biṭṭimaya.[50]
1189 A.D. — Biṭṭibovā.[51]
1194 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.[52]
1195 A.D. — Biṭṭigauḍa.[53]
1198 A.D. — Biṭṭiga.[54]

During this century it is still in the districts of Śimogā, Hassan and Kaḍur that the name 'biṭṭi' is popular. Out of these 32 inscriptions, 11 are found in Hassan, 10 in Śimogā, 4 in Kaḍur, 3 in Mysore, 2 in Chitaldrug, 1 in Tumkur. It has therefore spread over three more districts. In the above-mentioned inscriptions the name Biṭṭideva or Biṭṭiga by which the Hoysaḷa king is known has not been mentioned, as we have done it in the chapter on Etymology. It must be recalled that more than fifty inscriptions from all over Karnāṭaka mentioned this king. Six among those inscriptions are carved on Vīragals and commemorate the death of a hero. Other 'biṭṭi' are governors, ministers or petty officers under the Hoysaḷa kings.

Together with these 'biṭṭi', it is during this century that we begin to find its doublet 'viṭṭi', in Tamil inscriptions :

1120 A.D. — Viṭarana perunderuvu.[55]
1125 A.D. — Viṭṭapaya.[56]
1129 A.D. — Vīṭarāga.[57]
1130 A.D. — Viṭṭiaraisa (Visnuvardhana Hoysaḷa).[58]
1158 A.D. — Viṭṭirunda perumal.[59]
1178 A.D. — Viṭarāja.

Among these six inscriptions, two names, 'vīṭarāga' and 'vīṭarāja' are those of a Jaina deity, one, 'Viṭṭirunda perumal' is the name of an image of Viṣṇu.

We then come to the thirteenth century which seems to contain the greatest number of references to the name 'biṭṭi'.

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[45] *EC* 8. Sb. 20.
[46] *EC* 11. Dg. 44.
[47] *EC* 5. Ak. 79.
[48] *EC* 5. Ak. 61.
[49] *EC* 5. Ak. 39.
[50] *EC* 8. Sb. 179.
[51] *EC* 5. Ak. 48.
[52] *MAD* (1941), p. 147.
[53] *EC* 6. Ck. 55.
[54] *EC* 8. Sb. 140.
[55] *IMP* Tanjore 356.
[56] *EC* 6. Kd. 10.
[57] *EI* 6.165.
[58] *EC* 10. Cb. 17.
[59] *EC* 3. Sr. 62.

1200 A.D. — Baṭṭiyakeri.[60]
1200 A.D. — Beṭṭajiya.[61]
1204 A.D. — Biṭṭimarasa.[62]
1205 A.D. — Biṭiyamagāvuṇḍa and biṭiyanahalli.[63]
1206 A.D. — Biṭṭagāvuḍa.[64]
1207 A.D. — Beṭṭa (Telugu king).[65]
1208 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.[66]
1209 A.D. — Biṭṭaya, Biṭṭayyana, Biṭṭisamudra.[67]
1210 A.D. — Beṭṭarasa, Beṭṭarāja, Beṭṭasena, Beṭṭachamupa.[68]
1211 A.D. — Biṭṭayya, Biṭṭenahalli.[69]
1211 A.D. — Biṭṭeyanāyaka.[70]
1211 A.D. — Biṭṭisetti.[71]
1215 A.D. — Biṭṭeyanayaka.[72]
1215 A.D. — Baṭṭeyur.[73]
1215 A.D. — Biṭṭaguru and Biṭeśvara.[74]
1216 A.D. — Biṭṭeya Hebbaruva.[75]
1216 A.D. — Biṭṭebovā.[76]
1218 A.D. — Biṭṭavur.[77]
1220 A.D. — Beṭṭahalli.[78]
1220 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.[79]
1229 A.D. — Beṭṭigāuṇḍa.[80]
1232 A.D. — Biṭṭeyanāyaka.[81]
1249 A.D. — Beṭṭachamuvara and Beṭṭachamupa.[82]
1249 A.D. — Biṭṭeśvara.[83]
1252 A.D. — Beṭṭachamupa, Beṭṭadaṇṇāyaka, Beṭṭesvara, Beṭṭeyanna.[8
1255 A.D. — Biṭṭa.[85]
1290 A.D. — Biṭṭiolanāyaka.[86]
1291 A.D. — Biṭṭeya.[87]

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[60] *EC* 7. Sk. 227.
[61] *EC* 5. Ak. 38.
[62] *EC* 7. Sk. 225.
[63] *EC* 11. Ch. 23.
[64] *EC* 6. Kd. 145.
[65] *EI* 7.121, 3.
[66] *EC* 6. Kd. 117.
[67] *EC* 5. Ak. 40.
[68] *EC* 5. Cp. 244.
[69] *EC* 6. Kd. 118.
[70] *EC* 6. Kd. 112.
[71] *EC* 7. Sh. 103.
[72] *EC* 6. Kd. 110.
[73] *EC* 6. Kd. 132.
[74] *EC* 5. Ak. 51.
[75] SALETORE, B. A. *History of Tuluva*, p. 258.
[76] *EC* 7. Sh. 52.
[77] *EC* 8. Sg. 133.
[78] *EC* 8.
[79] *EC* 5. Bl. 99.
[80] *EC* 3. Nj. 36.
[81] *EC* 12. Ti. 135.
[82] *EC* 6. Ck. 20.
[83] Ibid.,
[84] *EC* 5. Cp. 242.
[85] *EC* 5. Ak. 108.
[86] *EC* 8. Sg. 31.
[87] *EC* 12. Tp. 39.

Out of these twenty eight inscriptions of the thirteenth century, seven come from Śimogā, seven from Hassan, eight from Kaḍur, two from Tumkur and one each from Mysore and Chitaldrug. The proportion remains thus the same than in the twelfth century, the three districts of Śimogā, Hassan and Kaḍur having the highest number of 'Biṭṭis'. It is to be noticed that the Telugu king Beṭṭabhūpa of the North Arcot inscription is the same as the 'Veṭṭabhūpa' of the Conjeevaram inscription. The 1205 inscription is carved on a vīragal set on the 'Paṇḍuraṅga' hill. The 1215 and 1249 inscriptions give the name of a god, 'Biṭeśvara' and 'Biṭṭeśvara'. It is during this century that the name Viṭhṭhala began to appear in inscriptions, and precisely in the Śimogā district :

1216 A.D. — Viṭṭhaleśa (on the Tuṅgabhadrā).[88]
1217 A.D. — Viṭṭhaladeva.[89]
Then in Hassan district we find the name of a village :
1227 A.D. — Viṭhalabeyakere.[90]
where there is the mention of god Bheṭala who is propitiated by military deeds. We have already two spellings of the name, Viṭṭhala and Viṭhala. Then :
1265 A.D. — Viṭhṭhaladevarasa, the name of a man in Chitaldurga District,[91] a devotee of god Somnātha. In 1270 and 1273 we find the names 'Viṭhṭhala', 'Viṭhala' for the god of Paṇḍharpūr. In 1277 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā the name of an adhikara of Belur in Hassan,[92] 1284 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā the name of a man in the gift of a village[93] called Beṭṭadakote in Mysore district. And in Śimogā again, in 1285 A.D. — Viṭhaladaṇṇāyaka the son-in-law of the Kuruva king Rāmacandra.[94]
1297 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā in an inscription in Kaḍur district.[95]
1298 A.D. — Viṭṭhayā name of the spiritual son of Bhattācārya[96] in Śimogā who consecrated a temple dedicated to 'Viṭhaleśvar' at Tare.
1299 A.D. — Viṭṭhalaprabhu the name of a man in Hassan.[97]

We have therefore ten inscriptions of the thirteenth century mentioning Viṭṭhala out of which 4 are found in the Śimogā district, three in Hassan and one each in Chitaldurga, Mysore and Kaḍur. The complete list of the inscriptions mentioning Viṭhṭhala is as follows :

1216 A.D. — Viṭṭhaleśa, name of a god, in Śimogā dist.
1217 A.D. — Viṭṭhala, name of a god, in Śimogā dist.
1227 A.D. — Viṭhalabeyakere, name of a village, in Hassan dist.

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[88] *EC* 7. Sh. 54.
[89] *EC* 8. Sr. 135.
[90] *MAD* (1940), p. 117.
[91] *EC* 11. Dg. 162.
[92] *EC* 5. Bl. 53.
[93] *EC* 4. Ng. 41.
[94] *EC* 8. Hn. 17.
[95] *EC* 6. Tk. 88.
[96] *EC* 8. Sg. 99.
[97] *EC* 5. Ak. 121.

1237 A.D. — Viṭhala and Viṭhṭhala, name of a god, at Paṇḍharpūr.
1265 A.D. — Viṭhṭhaladevarasa, name of a man, in Chitaldurga dist.
1270 A.D. — Viṭhṭhala, name of a god, at Paṇḍharpūr.
1273 A.D. — Viṭhṭhala and Viṭhala, name of a god, at Paṇḍharpūr.
1286 A.D. — Viṭhala, name of a man, in Śimogā dist.
1298 A.D. — Viṭhaleśvara, name of a god, in Śimogā dist.
1299 A.D. — Viṭṭhalaprabhu, name of a man, in Hassan dist.

During the fourteenth century, the proportion of the Viṭhṭhalas increases as compared with the 'Biṭṭis' :

1300 A.D. — Biṭṭisetti.[98]
1323 A.D. — Viṭṭimaṅgala.[103]
1300 A.D. — Viṭhaladevī.[99]
1301 A.D. — Viṭhu and Viṭhuka.[100]
1310 A.D. — Biṭṭigāvuṇḍa and Biṭṭisetti.[101]
1311 A.D. — Viṭhṭhala and Viṭhala.
1320 A.D. — Biṭṭaya.[102]
1323 A.D. — viṭṭimaṅgala.[103]
1347 A.D. — Viṭhala Somayājī.[104]
1356 A.D. — Biṭṭara and Viṭṭhala.[105]
1368 A.D. — Beṭṭur.[106]
1372 A.D. — Viṭhala Gāuṇḍa.[107]
1384 A.D. — Viṭhala deva.[108]
1385 A.D. — Viṭhṭhayā and Viṭhṭhappā.[109]
1385 A.D. — Beṭṭichiṭṭihali.[110]
1393 A.D. — Biṭṭiya heggade.[111]

Out of these 15 inscriptions, seven mention 'Biṭṭi' and eight Viṭṭhala or Viṭṭi. Five are found in Śimogā, three in Hassan, three in Kaḍur, one each in Paṇḍharpūr, Kolar, and Bundelkhand. The 1356 inscription shows that the name Viṭhṭhala was closely connected with the first Vijayānagar dynasty from its very beginning.

During the fifteenth century, and under the Vijayānagara kings, the name Viṭhṭhala became more and more popular. One of the relatives of these kings was the governor of the Araga kingdom who ruled from 1404 to 1440 and left many inscriptions. In the nineteen inscriptions of this ruler, he is called 'Viṭhṭhala' once, 'Viṭhaṇṇā' five times, Viṭhṭhaṇṇā five times, 'Viṭhappā' three times Vīraṇṇā three times and 'Vīrappā' twice. These variations in the spelling of the same name shows that even in the fourteenth century the name 'Viṭhṭhala' was not yet fixed.

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[98] *EC* 6. Kd.
[99] *EC* 5. Bl. 67.
[100] *EI* 4.174.
[101] *EC* 6. Tk. 82.
[102] *EC* 3. Ng. 19.
[103] *EC* 10. kl. 10.
[104] *EC* 8. Sb. 375.
[105] *EI* 3.22.
[106] *EC* 7. Sk. 282.
[107] *EC* 8. Sb. 199.
[108] *EC* 8. Th. 149.
[109] *MAD* (1941), p. 245, 6.
[110] *EC* 5. Bl. 148.
[111] *EC* 6. Kp. 29.

In the following list of the inscriptions of the fifteenth century we have omitted the mention of the above mentioned ruler.

1401 A.D. — Viṭhala hebbaru.[112]
1404 A.D. — Iṭṭala.[113]
1404 A.D. — Viṭhapa, Viṭhapanga and Viṭhappana.[114]
1406 A.D. — Viṭhalapura.[115]
1408 A.D. — Viṭhaleśvara, on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā.[116]
1420 A.D. — Viṭhala.[117]
1421 A.D. — Beṭṭakereya.[118]
1424 A.D. — Viṭṭhapā.[119]
1425 A.D. — Viṭhappā daṇṇāyaka.[120]
1426 A.D. — Beṭṭakerāye.[121]
1429 A.D. — Viṭhappā.[122]
1450 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā.[123]

Out of these twelve inscriptions only two mention 'Beṭṭa'. During the fifteenth century therefore, it seems that the name Viṭhṭhala or one of its forms, 'Viṭhappā' or 'Viṭhaṇṇā' nearly succeeded in replacing the older name 'Biṭṭi'. Seven of these inscriptions come from the Śimogā district, one from Kaḍur, and one from Hassan. The name Viṭhṭhala was therefore more popular in the very district where the name 'Biṭṭi' formerly occupied the same position.

During the sixteenth century, the name Viṭhṭhala is used more and more :

1513 A.D. — Viṭṭhala (at Vijayānagar).[124]
1515 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā.[125]
1516 A.D. — Beṭṭherayaswami.[126]
1516 A.D. — Biṭṭaleśvara (on the banks of the Tuṅgabhadrā).[127]
1516 A.D. — Viṭṭhala.[128]

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[112] *EC* 6. Sg. 28.

[113] Saletore, *History of Tuluva*, p. 152.

[114] *EC*. 8. Th. 134.

[115] *EC* 8. Th. 221.

[116] *EC* 8. Th. 222.

[117] *EC* 8. Th. 216.

[118] *EC* 8. Tl. 144.

[119] *EI* 3.41.

[120] *EC* 8. Tl. 163.

[121] *EC* 8. Tl. 144.

[122] *MAD* (1941), p. 167.

[123] *EC* 8. Tl. 194.

[124] *HISI* p. 239.

[125] *EC* 6. Mg. 88.

[126] *EC* 12. Tr. 29.

[127] *EC* 3. Md. 115.

[128] *HISI* p. 241.

1519 A.D. — *Viṭhalabhaṭṭa.*[129]
1521 A.D. — Viṭhaṇṇā.[130]
1524 A.D. — Beṭṭappā.[131]
1529 A.D. — Viṭhaṇā upādhyā.[132]
1532 A.D. — Viṭhṭhala (at Vijayānagar).
1534 A.D. — Viṭṭhalapura.[133]
1535 A.D. — Viṭṭhaleśasya. (on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā).[134]
1535 A.D. — Viṭhala. (on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā).[135]
1537 A.D. — Viṭṭhala, Governor at Tinevelly.[136]
1540 A.D. — Viṭṭhaleśvara.[137]
1540 A.D. — Viṭṭhala bhaṭṭa.[138]
1542 A.D. — Viṭhala.[139]
1544 A.D. — Viṭhaleśvaradeva.[140]
1545 A.D. — Viṭṭhala.[141]
1550 A.D. — Viṭhaleśa (Śrīmat Paṇḍaraṅga).[142]
1551 A.D. — Viṭhalarāyya.[143]
1555 A.D. — Viṭṭhalappā.[144]
1556 A.D. — Viṭṭhaleśvara (on the bank of the Tuṅga.).[145]
1558 A.D. — Viṭṭala.[146]
1577 A.D. — Viṭṭhalācārya.[147]
1586 A.D. — Viṭṭhalabhaṭṭa, Paṇḍuraṅgaya, Puṇḍarikākṣa, Paṇḍari.[148]
1597 A.D. — Beṭṭiyaṭṭa nāḍu.[149]

Viṭhṭhala is thus mentioned in 23 out of these 27 inscriptions while 'Beṭṭa' is mentioned only four times. One of these inscriptions comes from Śimogā, four from Kaḍur, four from Hassan, four from Vijayānagara, three from Bellary, three from Chingleput, one each from Bangalore, Mysore, Cuddapah, Tumkur. There is an interesting variation between the various names of a minister of Sadāsīvarāya of Vijayānagar who is called : Viṭhaleśvaradeva, Viṭṭhala, Viṭṭhalappā, and Viṭṭala. We have thus the three aspects of the root, 'viṭh', 'viṭṭh' and 'viṭṭ'. In the same way, the god of the Viṭṭhalaswāmī temple at Vijayānagara is called 'Biṭṭaleśvara', 'Viṭṭhaleśvara' or 'Viṭhaleśa, representing the three aspects of the root ‘viṭh’, ‘viṭṭh’ and ‘biṭṭ’. On the other hand among the Brahmins who were granted some gift in the Viṭṭiperumal temple we found the names of ‘Viṭṭhala Bhaṭṭa’, Paṇḍuraṅga Bhaṭṭa, Puṇḍarikāksa, and Paṇḍari Bhaṭṭa : these people were called after the god of Paṇḍharpūr, the name of Paṇḍharpūr itself, and the name of Puṇḍarīka.

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[129] *EC* 5. Cp. 16.
[130] *EC* 4. Ng. 82.
[131] *EC* 7. Sh. 26.
[132] *EC* 6. Sg. 18.
[133] *IMP* (Bellary), 459.
[134] *EC* 5. Ak. 126.
[135] *EC* 5. Ak. 167.
[136] *HISI* p. 248.
[137] *EI* 3.149.
[138] *EI* 3.150.
[139] *EC* 6. Kd. 160.
[140] *EC* 9. Bg. 30.
[141] *IMP* (Chingleput) 717.
[142] *MAD* (1944), pp. 49, 52.
[143] *IMP* (Bellary) 313.
[144] Ibid., 251.
[145] *EI* 4.2.
[146] *IMP* (Cuddapah) 322.
[147] *EI* 12.345.
[148] *EI* 12.164, 166, 180, 185.
[149] *EC* 12. Cg. 24.

During the following centuries the name Viṭṭhala is broadly used as a personal name in Mahārāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka. The form ’Beṭṭa’ or ‘Biṭṭi’ however is not altogether forgotten, for we find several rajas of Mysore wearing these names.

We have given above the chronological lists of the names called after one form or the other of the name ‘Viṭṭhala’. It would be interesting to locate on the map the various place-names mentioned in the inscriptions and called after the same god. In śimogā district we found, ‘Beṭṭamakki’, Beṭṭada kurali’, Beṭṭiyakere, Biṭṭavur, Beṭṭahalli Beṭṭuga nāḍa-grāma, Viṭhalapura i.e. seven places.

In Kaḍur district there are five places: ‘Biṭṭenahalli’, Baṭṭiyur’, ‘Biṭṭavalli’, ‘Baṭṭeyuru’, ‘Viṭhalapura’.

In Hassan district, three places: ‘Biṭṭaravalli’, ‘Viṭhalabeyakere’, Viṭhalapura.

In Coorg, five places: ‘Kote Beṭṭa’, ‘Biṭṭamaṅgala’, Beṭṭiyatunāḍ’, ‘Beṭṭadakote’, ‘Beṭṭagiri’.

In Mysore district, four places: ‘Beṭṭadapura’, ‘Bettinapureya’, ‘Beṭṭinapureya’, ‘Beṭṭahalli’, ‘Beṭṭabid’.

In Chitaldurg, two places: ‘Beṭṭadakodavur’, ‘Beṭṭavur’.
In Bellary district: ‘Viṭṭhalapura’.
In Tumkur district: ‘Viṭhaladevahalli’.
In Hunsur district: ‘Beṭṭadaiur’.
In Bangalore district: ‘Beṭṭahalli’.
In South Kanara district: ‘Viṭṭhala’.
In Nellore district: ’Viṭṭhalapura’
In North Arcot district: ‘Viṭṭirundam’.

From the above evidence we may safely draw the following conclusions: First that the name ‘Biṭṭiga’ originates from the hilly country or Male-Sime actually situated in the Śimogā, Hassan and Kaḍur districts. It is there that we first come across the name and there that we find it afterwards chiefly mentioned. Secondly, that the name Viṭṭhala also originates from that country and is but a derived form from the former name which was in the course of the thirteenth century superseded by the latter. Thirdly that ‘Betti’ or ‘Biṭṭi’ or ‘Beṭṭa’ was the name of a god connected with a hilly country. Unfortunately the inscriptions do not give us a clear idea as to the nature of this god.

Paṇḍharpūr is also mentioned several times in inscriptions:

489 A.D. — Pāṇḍaraṅgavalli.[150]
516 A.D. — Pāṇḍaraṅgapalli.[151]
757 A.D. — Bhāṇḍaraga viṭṭage.[152]
1237 A.D. — Pāṇḍarage and Pāṇḍaraṅge.[153]
1249 A.D. — Pauṇḍarīka kṣetre.[154]
1255 A.D. — Paṇḍuraṅga.[155]
1257 A.D. — Phāganipūr.[156]
1311 A.D. — Paṇḍaripūr.[157]

The first inscription which dates from the time of Pulakesin the first, is spurious, the spelling of those earlier forms of the name of Paṇḍharpūr is 'Paṇḍarage' or 'Paṇḍaraṅge'. The form of this name is Kannaḍa as well as the term palli or valli, and also 'viṭṭage'. M. Saletore states that Paṇḍara is a Kannaḍa name, but references to this name are very few, and do not give a clear idea of the meaning of the word.

Inscriptional evidence therefore points clearly towards a Kannaḍa origin. If Paṇḍharpūr belonged formally to the Kannaḍa speaking country this would seem natural enough, but if, as some state, this country was never a Kannaḍa-speaking one, then it must be explained why the god Viṭṭhala has a Kannaḍa name as well as the town itself, and how and when this god came to Paṇḍharpūr.

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[150] Altem Copper-plates, Kolhapur, in *IA* 7.211.

[151] *MAD* (1929), p. 198.

[152] *EI* 5.202.

[153] *IHQ* (1935), pp. 775 ff.

[154] *IA* 14.68, 75.

[155] *EC* 5. Ak. 108.

[156] RAJAVADE, V. K. *Granthamâla*, 12.1.

[157] Ibid., 12.3.

CHAPTER IX

ORIGIN OF THE CULT OF VITHOBĀ

Viṭhobā, with his unusual name and its peculiar image has always been for the non-Vārkarīs a kind of a riddle. Already in the Līlācaritra there is a story on the origin of Viṭhobā "so provoking as to be by itself a sufficient reason of hatred between the Manbhāv and the Vārkarīs."[1] Cakradhara affirms that Viṭhṭhala was a mere robber who, together with two others, Nāmdev a fisherman, and Mhaya a gurava looted and murdered travellers and country people.

One day they went to the village of Maṅgalaveḍha and after having looted it they went away with the cattle. The gurava went ahead with the cattle while Viṭhṭhala and Nāmdev remained at the rear to stop the villagers rushing to the rescue. The two robbers were finally slain at a place called Paṇḍharī. Afterwards Viṭhṭhala's sons came to the place where their father had been killed and set there a commemorative pillar or 'bhaḍkhamb', and a linga. This pillar was then worshipped and the fame of Viṭhṭhala was spread by the devotional songs or abhangs that his sons composed in his honour.

This story which is evidently apocryphal is interesting for several reasons. It shows first the bitter animosity between the two sects since their very beginning. It then connects the cult of Viṭhobā with the custom to erect hero-stones of Vīragals on the place where a soldier or a fighter met his fate. It is true that such hero-stones are found abundantly over the whole of Maharāṣṭra and Karnāṭaka. Besides, we have noticed that on these stones very often the personages commemorated have their arms akimbo, like Viṭhobā s peculiar feature. But there is an intrinsic difficulty in the story. Those stones are erected to commemorate the death of a man killed by robbers in trying to protect or to recapture the cattle of his village. Several of these heroes who were called Biṭṭiga have been mentioned in our eighth chapter.[2] A stone was never erected to commemorate the death of the cattle-thieves !

It is difficult to believe that Cakradhara invented this story completely. It is more probable that he twisted the story of an old legend, to fit in his apologetic aim. The story could have been that Viṭṭhala was a brave villager who lost his life in fighting with some cattle thieves, and was thereafter worshipped as a cattle guardian by his fellow villagers. However, there is no trace of such a legend outside the questionable testimony of Cakradhara.

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[1] KALELKAR, N. La secte Mânbhaâv, p. 7. : see *Lilâcaritra*, 2.246. (edited by NENE).

[2] c. 8, p. 171.

Such a story of a hero becoming a protecting god is not altogether impossible and we have in the Indian folklore many an instance of a similar event. We have already mentioned the similarity between Bir Kuar the cattle-god of the Āhirs of western Bihār and Viṭhobā. Bir Kuar images are among the very rare Indian images with both arms akimbo. In some of the songs praising Bir Kuar, we found some brief account of his life :

"Bir Kuar fought with a cattle-thief and was killed. He appeared in a dream and said he would protect the cattle. His wife committed 'sati'."[3]

The chief functions of Bir Kuar are, according to Archer "to cause she-buffaloes to come on heat, to prevent sickness in a herd, or attack by tigers or cattle thieves."[4]

Some peculiarities in the cult of Viṭhobā could be explained by his being formerly a cattle-god. Viṭhobā for instance is the favourite deity of the Dhanghar or shepherds.[5] Now, according to Enthoven, "There can be little doubt that they are a pre-Aryan race".[6] Mhasobā, or the he-buffalo god has some connection with the Vārkarī Panth. The miracle performed by Jñānadeva at Paiṭhan is significant. To convince the Brahmins of this town of his divine power he made a buffalo recite the four Vedas. Thereafter the animal followed Jñānadeva until he died at Aḷē in Poona district where his master buried him, and where he is still worshipped specially on the ekādaśī of Caitra.[7] The story is told in Mahipati's Bhaktavijaya : "Jñānadeva went up to the buffalo and placed his hand upon its head, saying : "Recite at once the Ṛgveda and satisfy these Brahmins." As soon as he said this a most extraordinary thing happened. The young buffalo recited the Vedas with proper intonation....[8] He went on doing so all along the way whereupon Jñānadeva and Nivṛttināth conferred together and felt that through this continualy reciting the Vedas by the buffalo, the Karma-mārga will be destroyed. The deep inner meaning of the Vedas is a secret. If it is plainly divulged to people, it will be misunderstood and nobody will practise the Karmamārga."[9] ... One day while walking along the path, they encamped in the forest belonging to Āḷandī. Here the animal that recited the Vedas died. Having placed it in a tomb, they caused it to reach the state of final deliverance ... After worshipping the tomb, they smeared it with 'shendur'. That place is still called Mhasobā."[10]

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[3] ARCHER, W. G. *The Vertical Man*, p. 51.

[4] Ibid., p. 25.

[5] ENTHOVEN, R. E. *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, 1.318.

[6] Ibid., 1.311.

[7] *BG* 18.3.104. (Poona).

[8] Mahipati, Bhaktavijaya, 9.62.

[9] Ibid., 9.109.

The meaning of this apologue is clear. The knowledge of the Vedas should not be restricted to a selected few, but taught to everybody so that everybody may benefit by it. And it is significant that after that miracle Jñānadeva wrote his Marāṭhī commentary on the Gītā. The 'Buffalo' of the story may represent the symbol of the common, uneducated mass of the people.

Bīr Kuar, as we have said, has been identified with Kṛṣṇa, and this identification was natural enough if we remember that Kṛṣṇa was himself a cattle-god. But even this theory of the identification suggested by Mr. Archer is unnecessary. For according to Dr. Bhandarkar[11] 'The child Kṛṣṇa' was the god of the Ābhīras, (Sanskrit form of the name Āhīr), a tribe which occupied the Punjab in the first century A.D. Bīr Kuar may be a popular form of the name Kṛṣṇa. The various Āhīras legends connected with the life story of Bīr Kuar have not been borrowed from the Hindu Mythology, but it is probable that these legends have contributed to the latest development of this Avatāra of Viṣṇu.

Viṭhobā is also a form of Bālakṛṣṇa and his connection with the cattle is still remembered in the cult of to-day. The legend relates how Kṛṣṇa came to Paṇḍharī with his herd. Traces of the footprints of cows are worshipped at the temple of Viṣṇupada together with the foot-prints of Kṛṣṇa. During the Śejāratī, footprints of Kṛṣṇa and cow are printed on the carpet set on the ground between the image and the bed-chamber. On the back of the image itself have been shown traces left by the bag in which Kṛṣṇa was carrying his meals, while tending his herd. Still another rite seems to point out to a pastoral origin. We are referring to the Nāmdev Gruel. The gruel, as Dandekar[13] has remarked is a pastoral food : it is the food of the Vedic god Pūṣan, the god of a nomadic pastoral tribe, and it is called in the Ṛgveda Karambha. In Marāṭhī the name is "kālā".

A curious detail of the above mentioned rite is that the Haridāsa on that occasion is led to the temple with a pair of slippers on his head. There is a similar ceremony in the cult of Vetāl[14] in the Savantvāḍī State. In some temples dedicated to that god, a new pair of slippers are offered to the god every month, for it is believed that Vetāl wanders about during the night, and his slippers are soon worn out. A similar ceremony concerning sandals is held in the Keśava Temple at Belur in Hassan district.[15] A pair of sandals are kept in a glass showcase inside this temple. They are supposed to be used by the god and will be worn out after one or two years. The Ādikarṇāṭakas to whom the fact is revealed in a dream, prepare new ones with great devotion and ceremonial purity and offer them to Keśava. The pieces of the worn out sandals are used as a sort of a charm and tied to the necks or arms or waists of babies as a 'rakṣā' against evil spirit. It is to be noticed that those Ādikaraṇāṭakas, who are special devotees of Vetāl, are the Mahārs, i.e. the outcaste people. Furthermore, the god of the Belūr temple is Viṣṇu under the form of Keśava, and Nāmdev, whose name is connected with the gruel ceremony, constantly refers to Viṭhobā as Keśava.

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[10] Ibid., 9.129.

[11] BHANDARKAR, *Vaiṣṇavism* etc. .., pp. 49 ff.

[12] ENTHOVEN, *Tribes* etc. .., p. 22.

[13] DANDEKAR, R. N. Pûṣan, the Pastoral God of the Veda, in *NIA* 5.49 (1942).

[14] JACKSON, M. T. *Folklore of the Konkan*, p. 21.

However, these similarities between Viṭhobā and the god of the Āhīrs are not sufficient enough to state that Viṭhobā was originally a pastoral god. It is most unlikely that the Āhīr tribes have ever been in the Solāpūr district, at least there is no trace of their presence here.

Moreover Āhīrs are not the only people devoted to Bālakṛṣṇa. Viṭhobā, in that respect, has been connected several times with Bālājī, the famous god of Tirupati. The authors of "Three great Acāryas"[16] mention "Viṭobā" in connection with Bāla-Kṛṣṇa and the name Bālājī given to Venkaṭeśvara. S. K. Aiyangar[17] states that the god of Tirupati is called Bālājī, not on account of his being Subrahamaṇya formerly, but because he was identified with Bālakṛṣṇa. The early Alvars say that they "delighted in referring to God in one of his aspects as a child, either as Rāma or as Kṛṣṇa, preferably the latter. It is Bāla-Kṛṣṇa that has given rise to the name Bālājī since Kṛṣṇa as "Viṭobā" is very popular in the Marāṭhā Country."[18]

There are indeed curious similarities between Viṭhobā and Venkaṭeśvara. Venkaṭeśvara means really "the god of the Venkaṭa Mountains", i.e. of the white mountain.[19] Pāṇḍuraṅga Beṭṭa could mean also the white (pāṇḍu) coloured (raṅga) mountain (beṭṭa). Biṭṭaleśvara or Biṭṭeśvara, as Viṭhobā is called in Kannaḍa means "the god of the hill."

Viṭhobā is sometimes considered as Harihara, i.e. as a combined form of Viṣṇu-Śiva. And indeed for many Vārkarīs, there is no difference, still less opposition, between Viṣṇu and Śiva. The cult of Viṭhobā by this non-sectarian aspect has spared to the Mahārāṣṭra country the bitter rivalries between the devotees of the two gods. It was not the same in the Tāmilnāḍ where there has always been a clear separation between the various sects, and frequent clashes between their respective followers. Venkaṭeśvar was not immune from this rivalry and for centuries up to the present day there has been an endless controversy on the subject of the real nature of the god of Tirupati. Is he a form of Viṣṇu or a form of Śiva ? He is universelly recognised as the form of Viṣṇu say the Vaiṣṇavites. But the Śaivaites retort that it is Śankarācārya himself who gave the god his name after a crystal liṅga set up by him at that place. The very fact of the existence of that controversy shows that Venkaṭeśvar was originally a non-Aryan god who was probably integrated into the Hindu Pantheon either as a form of Śiva or of Viṣṇu.

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[15] Hassan District Guide and Handbook, p. 96.

[16] *Three Great Acharyas*, by VARIOUS SCHOLARS, p. 121.

[17] AIYANGAR, S. K. *Ancient India*, p. 216.

[18] SRINIVASA RAO, V. N. *Tirupati : Srî Venkateśvar Balajî.*

[19] Ibid., 1.5.

The reminiscence of this hinduisation can be found in the legend built up to explain the origin of this god, and there are indeed striking similarities between this legend and those concerning the origin of Viṭhobā. According to several stories, Rukmiṇī, the wife of Kṛṣṇa escaped from Dwārakā out of jealousy for the marked preference of her husband for Rādhā, the Gopī. She wandered for a long time, until she came to the bank of the Bhīmā in the midst of a large forest. Kṛṣṇa after a long search at last discovered her and succeeded in reconciling her. At Tirupati, Viṣṇu is also searching for his wife who had taken the form of the daughter of the local king in order to be able to lead an ascetic life. After many adventures, Viṣṇu succeeded in recovering his wife by marrying this princess.

Venkaṭeśvara is most probably a pre-Aryan god, one of the forms of the child-god worshipped in Dravidian countries under the various names of Subrahmaṇya, Muruga, Skanda, Kumāra, Velāyudha, etc. As Mr. H. K. Sastri puts, "It may be noted that the shrines sacred to Skanda are always situated on hills, as at Tiruttani, Palnis, etc."[21] "The famous image of Subrahmaṇya on the Palni hills has only two arms in one of which he holds the śakti the other resting freely on the waist."[22] Muruga has been included in Aryan theogony from very early ages. The 'Tirumurugarrupaddai' mentions the name of Mayon (Viṣṇu), Śiva, Brahma and Muruga as the four famous deities of Brahmanic pantheon which means that in the eighth century the fusion between Northern and Southern cultures was already a fact of long standing.[23]

Was Viṭhobā also a form of the Dravidian child-god ? True enough, the various ceremonies performed at the Paṇḍharpūr temple are very

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[20] SASTRI, H. K. *South Indian Images*, p. 178.

[21] Imid., p. 178.

[22] Ibid., p. 177.

[23] ARIOKYASWAMI, M. The Religion of the Tamils 1.800 years ago; in *K. V. R. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, p. 497.

much like those performed at Tirupati. The god in both the temples is given the care that a mother gives to her child. But this pattern of ceremony is quite usual in many other temples as well, and we would need a critical study of these ceremonies and their origin to see whether they are of Dravidian origin or not.

The reference made by Dr. Sastri to the hills where the Subrahmaṇya temples are always built may be more valuable for our present study. The sacred places of Mahārāṣṭra which are of a pre-Aryan origin are Jejurī where Khaṇḍobā is worshipped, and Tuljāpūr where stands the temple sacred to Ambābāī. On the other hand, the sacred places which seem to be of a pure Aryan origin are usually in the plains and near sacred pools or rivers, especially near sangams.

The passage from a pre-Aryan deity to an Aryan god is still noticeable in the case of Khaṇḍobā. One of his more popular names is Malhāri, where it is not difficult to discover the Kannaḍa root 'mal' which means a hill. The Brahmanic legend[24] which tells the story of the origin of the place says that, once upon a time "some brahmins living near Jejūrī were attacked and their property carried off by a demon called Maṇimalla or Mallāsura. In answer to the prayers of the Brahmins Śiva appeared as the warrior Khaṇḍobā and slew the demon. Before his death Malla was converted to Śaivism and both he and Khaṇḍobā were absorbed into Śiva. In acknowledgement of Malla's conversion, obeisance is made to the large stone of Malla which stands in the courtyard of Khaṇḍobā's temple." This demon stealing the property of the Brahmins reminds one of the famous Rākṣasas who were living in the mythical Daṇḍakāraṇya and disturbing the Vedic sacrifices performed by the Brahmins. They were aboriginal tribes who resorted to the hills when their country was invaded by the Aryans. Malla must have been either one of their hill-gods or one of their chieftains slain in battle.

Such Purāṇic legends are fairly common among the local tradition concerning hills in Mahārāṣṭra. In Kolhāpūr for instance,[25] the demon Kolāsura was slain by Mahālakṣmī and in the Totibā hill,[26] near by, Ratnāsura was killed by Śiva under the form of Kedāreśvara who had come from the Himalayas at the instance of Ambābāī. The legend told of the origin of Mahābaleśvara is of the same kind[27] : Two 'Rākṣasas' or demon brothers named Mahābal and Atibal, bitter enemies of the Brahmans and their gods, were so powerful and warlike that they disturbed the devotions of the brahmins and harassed the people. The Brahmans appealed to Viṣṇu who came and killed the younger brother

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[24] *BG*. 18.3.135. (Poona).

[25] *BG* 24.311 (Kolhâpûr).

[26] Ibid., 24.299.

[27] *BG* 19.511. (Satara).

Atibal. Enraged at the death of his brother, Mahābal challenged the god to single combat. They fought so long that Viṣṇu became exhausted..." Finally he was slain, but before he and his brother died they were granted their dying wish, namely that Śiva and Viṣṇu should take their names and be worshipped there under the names of Atibaleśvar and Mahābaleśvar. At Devraṣṭa in Satara the Brahmanical caves lie on the spot where Śankara killed a gigantic sea-demon called Jālandhara.[28] At Saptaśṛṅga in Nāśik district the legends give an account of the general activity of the goddess Devī against all sorts of demons.[29] It is said that in early times, as the world was troubled by evil spirits, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra produced out of their combined essence a goddess to destroy all demons. The power of that deity was distributed between four places : Saptaṣṛṅga, Kolhāpūr, Tuḷjāpūr, and Mātāpūr. At Saptaṣṛṅga itself, Devī killed two demon brothers without much difficulty, but a third called Mahiṣāsura, who had assumed the form of a buffalo caused her much trouble. In the end he also was slain and Devī was called Mahiṣāsuramardinī.

The image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī is found in many places in Mahārāṣṭa and Karnāṭaka, some of them on the hills. One of the best known temples dedicated to this goddess is the temple built on the Cāmuṇḍā hill near Mysore. It is to be noted that the demon killed there is called Mahābalāsura as in Mahābaleśvara. The collection of all the legends concerning the various places where such a fight against demons took place, and a study on the significance of the killing of the buffalo would be a very valuable ethnological datum.

Is Viṭhobā connected with legends of this kind ? This god does not seem to have any direct relation with the killing of a demon, but Paṇḍharpūr has. The small hillock on which the great temple is built is said to have been the place of a fight between Viṣṇu and a demon. The demon defeated Viṣṇu, cutting off his arms, and Viṣṇu only escaped through the help of Mahādeva who smote the demon with his Kuṇḍala.[30] Otherwise, Viṭhobā does not seem to belong to this kind of deity.

We have seen that the name of Viṭhṭhala has no relation to any Buddhistic word. But it is certain that he has often been considered as Buddhāvatāra. There are several groups of images representing the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu where the ninth avatāra is called Buddha and it is represented under the form of Viṭhobā. There is such a representation for instance, in one of the caves at Junnar in Poona district.[31] In several popular books giving an account of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu,

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[28] Ibid., 19.465.

[29] *BG* 16.644 (Nâṣik).

[30] *BG* 20.436 (Solapûr).

[31] *BG* 18.3.199 (Poona).

Viṭhobā is also considered as the ninth avatāra, namely the Buddha.[32] In Viṭhobā's images of the thirteenth century in Karnāṭaka the god is holding in his hand the water vessel which is characteristic of the ascetic. Although Viṭhobā is thus considered as a specific avatāra of Viṣṇu namely the ninth, the purpose of this avatāra does not tally with the purpose of the others. In all the eight other avatāras, Viṣṇu assumes a form in order to save mankind from some particular evil or demon. On the contrary Viṣṇu takes the form of Viṭhobā for the sake of Puṇḍalīka, as a reward for his wonderful devotion to his parents.

This devotion of Puṇḍalīka for his parents is one of the most striking features of the Purāṇic legends concerning the origin of Viṭhobā. There is another legend according to which it might be said that Viṭhṭhala was the father of Puṇḍalīka who after the death of his father erected a memorial stone and paid his devotion to it. Memorial stones were not only erected for deceased warriors or Sati sacrifices, but sometimes for a Jaina holy man who had died by Sallekhana or fasting up to death and his disciples erected a memorial stone on the eleventh day after his passing away. Every year his death was commemorated.[33] This Viṭhṭhala could have had a monastery there at Paṇḍharpūr, and so after his death his disciples led by Puṇḍalīka performed every year special ceremonies in his honour. Puṇḍalīka in his turn died and his disciple erected also a stone, to commemorate his souvenir. Puṇḍalīka must have been a famous guru, muni as an inscription called him, and the place began to be called Pauṇḍarīka kṣetra, after his name. In the course of time the school of Jaina spirituality gathered around the great names of Viṭhṭhala and Puṇḍalīka, was transformed by the Brahmanical revival of the twelfth century Viṭhṭhala being identified with Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa and the Vārkarī school of spirituality sprang from the ashes of the Jaina community.

There is absolutely no historical proof to substantiate such an account of the origin of the cult of Viṭhobā. However it tallies with many details of the cult. We know that Puṇḍalīka was a name used by Jaina ascetics: it was the name of the chief disciple of the first Tīrthaṅkara Riṣabha. There are several Jaina temples consecrated to Puṇḍalīka: at Śatruñjaya in Kathiawar in the Ādisvara Bhagavān Tuk, there is a temple to Puṇḍarīka near the main gate of the 'tuk'. Each main temple has its small shrine to Puṇḍarīka in front and at the east of it. Viṭhṭhala seems to be a Jaina name also as it is used in several Jaina inscriptions, and it was the name of Viṣṇuvardhana when he was still a Jaina. Among the ministrants of the Amṛteśvara temple at Paṇḍharpūr there is one called 'Viṭṭhaladāsa' who is a Jaina.[34]

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[32] See for instance "Devâce dahâ avatâra", edited by Citraśâlâ, (1949).

[33] KASTURI, N. The Hero Stones of Mysore, in *K. V. R. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, pp. 205, 6.

In the light of the comparisons found between Viṭhobā and other gods, we may now try to reconstruct the history of the god of Paṇḍharpūr. It must however be pointed that such a history can only be hypothetical as before the thirteenth century no records concerning Viṭhobā are available.

What makes an investigation on the origin of Viṭhobā so complicated is that there are three distinct problems that continually interfere with one another. These three problems are the origin and derivation of the name, the origin and date of the god of Paṇḍharpūr, the origin and development of the god of the Vārkarī. It is possible to clarify the situation by tackling each of these problems separately.

The central point in our theory is the acceptance of the Vārkarī tradition concerning Puṇḍalīka. Puṇḍalīka is at the base of the presence of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr. The unanimous opinion of all the Vārkarī writers from the time of Jñānadeva up to now is cogent enough, and epigraphical evidence confirms in a way this tradition because during the thirteenth century A.D. Paṇḍharpūr was known as 'Pauṇḍarīka Kṣetre'[35] i.e. place sacred to Puṇḍalīka. And an inscription tells us that this Puṇḍalīka was a 'muni'. We can therefore safely state that it was Puṇḍalīka who gave Paṇḍharpūr its fame and its god. This Puṇḍalīka must have lived before the thirteenth century, but probably not too long before, as his memory was very vivid at that time.

If we examine the Vārkarī tradition concerning Puṇḍalīka, two facts seem to be historically probable: first the devotion of Puṇḍalīka for his parents, then the standing of Viṭhṭhala on a brick to reward Puṇḍalīka for his filial devotion. We can discard all the other legends concerning Puṇḍalīka as later additions. The existence of the god standing on a brick with his hands on his hips is due to Puṇḍalīka, and this god was named Viṭhṭhala on account of it.

Now we have seen that this peculiar posture of Viṭhṭhala with his hands on his hips does not point out to the classical image of Viṣṇu or of Kṛṣṇa, but to the representation of one in honour of whom a viragal was erected. It is therefore equally possible that Viṭhṭhala may be the name of such a person. Those stones commemorate the death either of a warrior fighting against cattle-thieves, or of a Jaina saint who underwent a fast up to death. Is it possible to infer from circumstantial evidence who this Viṭhṭhala was ?

At this point of our hypothesis we must be careful to distinguish the problem of the origin of the god of Paṇḍharpūr, and that of his name.

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[34] *BG* 20.461. (Solapûr).

[35] *IA* 14.68, 85.

A person of great fame named Viṭhṭhala died in Paṇḍharpūr. Afterwards many people were called by his name: but before his time, the name had, probably, not much significance. The word Viṭhṭhala is, as Dr. Sankalia puts it, in accordance with the consensus of most scholars and with the inscriptional evidence, "non-Sanskritic and Kannaḍa in origin". The earliest mention of that name in this form in inscriptions dates from 1216 A.D. There is however a mention of that name in the "Divyasūricarita" dating from the end of the eleventh century. This provides us with a "terminus a quo" to determine the date of the existence of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr, which must have occurred during the twelfth century A.D. This period would agree with the previous requisite that Puṇḍalīka must have lived at a date not too long before the middle of the thirteenth century.

Thus the name of the person living at Paṇḍharpūr at that time is a Kannaḍa name. That does not mean necessarily that the person himself was Kannaḍa, but it seems most likely. As people are generally called after the name of a god, this person called Viṭhṭhala might have been named after a Kannaḍa god Viṭhṭha who, as we have seen in our chapter on Epigraphy was probably a hill-god of Karnāṭaka. But it must be emphasized that this hill-god has nothing to do with our Viṭhṭhala of Paṇḍharpūr, barring the mere fact that this person bore his name, and this was only a fortunate occurrence.

Furthermore, the name Viṭhṭhala or any other name formed on the same root, as Biṭṭala or Biṭṭiga, seems to have been a favourite name among Jainas. It is not altogether impossible that the Viṭhṭhala who was living in Paṇḍharpūr during the eleventh or twelfth century was himself a Jaina. This is also supported by the fact that death by 'sallekhana' which is commemorated by a stone, is a Jaina custom.

It is therefore possible to give the following account of the origin of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr. There was living a Jaina holy man who died by fasting unto death. After his death, one of his disciples who was perhaps also his son, called Puṇḍalīka erected a stone to commemorate this event. This Puṇḍalīka became in his turn an ascetic of great repute, but he kept for his guru and father an intense devotion. It was the time when Jainism was gradually giving place to a revival of Hinduism based on the teachings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as well as those of the Bhagavad Gītā. The group of disciples gathered by Puṇḍalīka adopted in the course of time the doctrine, but kept faithfully the souvenir of Puṇḍalīka and of his Guru. It was not long before in their devotion they recognized in Viṭhṭhala a special avatāra of Viṣṇu incarnated for the benefit of the bhaktas. In the course of the thirteenth century the fame of Viṭhṭhala spread, at first chiefly in Karnātaka. The first representation of Viṭhṭhala which is found precisely in that country and which dates from that time pictures Viṭhṭhala as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu, his avatāra as an ascetic. The image kept the typical position of the arms akimbo but the hands were represented as holding the water vessel characteristic of an ascetic.

With the growing predominance of Vaiṣṇava ideas and teachings more characteristics belonging to Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa were attributed to Viṭhṭhala. Towards the end of the thirteenth century Jñānadeva was born in a family which was devoted to Viṭhṭhala as we can infer from the very name of his father Viṭhṭhalapant. Jñānadeva himself soon became a prominent Bhakta leader and by his writings and teachings practically founded the Vārkarī Panth.

This account of the origin of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr is only and merely an hypothesis, but it has the advantage to account for many of the known facts concerning this god, namely the traditional story concerning Puṇḍalīka, the peculiar appearance of the image of Viṭhṭhala, the connection of the god with the Kannaḍa country, his status as an avatāra of Viṣṇu. It accounts also for the injurious legend told by Cakradhara who simply distorted a tradition by considering the viragal, which was at the foundation of the cult, not as a commemorative memorial of the death of a saint, but as a memorial of the death of a warrior and stating that this warrior was a cattle-thief. It gives a reason for the Jaina claim of long standing that Viṭhṭhala was formerly one of them, although when this sect state that Viṭhṭhala was the Jina Nemināth they altogether mix up the tradition.

This transformation of a saint into an avatāra of a god is not an isolated fact. Common people and even educated writers are accustomed to identify the great saints of Mahārāṣṭra with various forms of gods of the Hindu Pantheon. Many instances of this phenomenon occurs in the works of Mahipati: in the first chapter of his "Bhaktavijaya" we read :

"Viṣṇu spoke thus to his bhaktas : Long ago I assumed an avatāra and killed evil demons, setting free the whole world from enemies. I am now carrying on the Buddha 'avatāra'.

Now I wish you all to become 'avatāras' in the world of mortals, in as many places as I have an abode, and in the ancient sacred places.

For instance, in the forest called Diṇḍīra there is a place named Paṇḍharī. Uddhava should become an avatāra there and turn the people of Dakṣiṇāpatha to worship me.

Akrura should become an avātara at Mathurā and Gokulvṛndāvan, and by his preachings turn all their inhabitants to my worship....

The Creator of the universe said to Śiva: "I wish you to become Narsi Mehta and cause the inhabitants of Junāgaḍ to hear the stories connected with the path of devotion.

I wish you to hasten before me. I also will soon follow you in the form of Jñānadeva. I shall explain the meaning of the Bhagavadagīta.

Brahmadeva will become Sopān, Sadāśiva will become Nivṛtti, Ādimāyā will become Muktābāi, and descend to the earth as avatārs . . .[36]

It is therefore not impossible that a saint called Viṭhṭhala came in the course of time to be considered as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu. But it must be said, once again, that this theory lies only on what we could call circumstantial evidence, and the problem concerning the origin of Viṭhobā is still an open question.

Mahipati, Bhaktavijaya, translated by ABBOT, J. A., 1.66.

POSTSCRIPT

To publish a book a few years after it has been written is often a disheartening experience. Once written, a page exists for its writer no more. That book is not his any more; the man he was when he wrote it, is dead. The name on the cover may be his, but it looks to him like a buried friend's. And each time anybody refers to his book as his, he can't help feeling uneasy.

Besides, where research work is concerned, new data may have been unearthed by him or by some fellow research worker which make his former study obsolete. Never can a true historian say : "Now I know." At the most he could say "I may be now nearer the truth"; and this endless quest for truth is his privileged duty as well as a constant reminder of the relativity of his knowledge.

Regarding the problem of the origin of Viṭhobā and of the Vārkarī Panth, some more facts are now available. A new inscription has been discovered in Paṇḍharpūr itself by Pr. S. G. Tuḷpuḷe which throws new light on the history of the temple of Viṭhoba.[1] According to Pr. Tuḷpuḷe's reading, the temple, a small structure at that time, was erected in 1189 A.D. Thus some of our previous statements have to be corrected : Where we wrote on p. 28, "We do not find any reference to Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr before 1237 A.D.," we should now say, "We do not find any clear reference to Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr before 1189 A.D." Then, the first inscriptional mention of Viṭhṭhala can no longer be said to be found in Śimogā in 1216 A.D. as we stated on p. 31, but at Paṇḍharpūr in 1189 A.D. Our similar statements made on pp. 131 and 134, are to be corrected in the same way. Furthermore, the new inscription shows that Paṇḍharpūr was first under the Yādava sceptre (in 1189 A.D.), then under the Hoysaḷa rule (in 1237 A.D.), only to become again part of the Yādava kingdom (in 1273 A.D.). We have thus to correct accordingly our statement on p. 33 where it was said that Paṇḍharpūr was "first under the sceptre of the Hoysaḷa". On the other hand, the new inscription confirms what we wrote on the same page, i.e., that Paṇḍharpūr became "a battlefield between the two kingdoms".

Unfortunately, the new discovery does not help us in tracing back more accurately the origin of the cult of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr. However, in spite of the lack of new data concerning this problem, and perhaps on account of it, we feel that a different approach is now required.

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[1] S. G. TULPULE : **Paṇḍharpūr-Viṭhṭhalamandirācyā itihāsātīl ek ajñāt duvā.**

The hypothetical account given on page 190 onwards of the origin of Viṭhṭhala at Paṇḍharpūr does not satisfy us any more, and, since we confessed in the very last sentence of our thesis that "the problem concerning the origin of Viṭhobā is still an open question", let us open it anew.

Descartes once wrote that we should never take anything for granted but always follow a "doute systematique" and only surrender to evidence. This "methode" is all the more required where religious matters are concerned. for there much is taken for granted to which our technological age will rightly never surrender. Superstition and legend have to disappear from our religious outlook, only true spirituality and exact history will meet successfully the challenge of our time. Historians have the grave duty to get to the core of religious belief, failing which materialistic criticism would sweep it away. Therefore let us try to put together all the doubtless facts so far available about the origin of Viṭhobā.

In 516 A.D. Paṇḍharpūr is already a village (palli) and the surrounding country along the Bhīmā river is fairly inhabited, since the neighbouring villages of Anevali, Caḷe and Kondarki are also already in existence. The copperplates found at Kolhāpūr which give us those details, don't mention the name of Viṭhṭhala in connection with Paṇḍharpūr which is just one name in the list of villages donated to a brahmin.[2] The only possible hint which would connect Viṭhṭhala and Paṇḍharpūr at that time is the name of that brahmin, Jayadviṭhṭha : The Viṭhṭha part of his name may refer to Viṭhṭhala but even then, we don't know whether the brahmin was an inhabitant of Paṇḍharpūr or not. We must therefore confess that according to the available evidence we don't know for sure whether by 516 A.D. Viṭhṭhala had already acquired some fame at Paṇḍharpūr.

In 757 A.D., the Cālukya king Kirtivarman II is camping at Paṇḍharpūr.[3] This village is then known as "Bhaṇḍaraga Viṭṭage". The mention of that name "Viṭṭage" is very important. It is the first clear inscriptional connection between Paṇḍharpūr and Viṭhṭhala under its prototype Viṭṭage, which is a Kannaḍa name well known in inscriptions dating from 618 A.D. onwards, particularly in the Śimogā, Hassan and Kaḍur districts of the Mysore State.[4] In its correct Kannaḍa spelling, this name of "Paṇḍaraga Viṭṭaga" is undoubtedly the origin of its later sanskritized form of "Paṇḍuraṅga Viṭhṭhala". Let us mention again here that most of the "Biṭṭiga" found in the Mysore inscriptions were petty village officers who died while fighting against cattle thieves and in honour of whom hero-stones were erected.

[2] M A D (1929), p. 198. cf. our thesis pp. 24-28 and 133-134.

[3] E I 5.204 (No. 63). cf. our thesis, pp. 29 and 180.

[4] E C 8. Ap. 547. our thesis p. 171.

In 808 A.D., the famous Rādhanpur grants of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda III confirm that names like Biṭṭha and Biṭṭha were fairly common as far north as the Ahmadnagar district.[5] In 848 A.D. the Eastern Cālukya King of Vengi Viṣṇuvardhana V is also called Biṭṭarasa, which shows that already at that time a connection was felt to exist between the words Biṭṭa and Viṣṇu.[6] Between 850 A.D. and 1100 A.D., no mention of Paṇḍharpūr has so far been found in inscriptions or copperplates; but the name "Biṭṭiga" under various forms is increasingly used in the Śimogā, Hassan and Kaḍur region. Between 950 A.D. and 980 A.D. only, no less than six heroes of that name were killed in fighting the cattle thieves.[7]

Between 1100 A.D. and 1189 A.D., nothing more is known about Paṇḍharpūr, but a very important datum concerning the name Viṭhṭhala has to be recorded. It is the famous conversion of the Hoysaḷa prince Viṣṇuvardhana. We have shown that his name was Biṭṭiga and that he assumed the name of Viṣṇuvardhana after his coming into power.[8] The traditional (but not inscriptional) record of his reign calls him Viṭhṭhala instead of Biṭṭiga. So we have here again a clear connection between the two words Biṭṭi and Viṣṇu, the latter being a Sanskritization of the former.

Thus we arrive at the very important date of 1189 A.D. A few definite conclusions can be drawn from the recently discovered inscription. There was at that time in Paṇḍharpūr a group of devotees of Viṭhṭhala, and they were granted by the Yādava king Bhillama some financial assistance to build a small structure to house their god. The connection between Viṭhṭhala and Paṇḍharpūr is therefore certain by that date and we can safely add that this connection was by then of already long standing, since there was a group of devotees dedicated to this god. It is also fairly probable that this group was the prototype of the Vārkarī sampradaya. It is interesting to note that the first clear mention of Viṭhṭhala in Paṇḍharpūr links that god with a group of devotees, when we remember the importance given in later times to the "Society of Saints" by the Vārkarīs.

In 1237 A.D., that is to say 48 years later, we are told of a new feature which is going to become later a dominant one : Paṇḍharpūr is by then known as the place of the ascetic Puṇḍalīk (Puṇḍarīka muni).[9]

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[5] E I 6.241.

[6] SIRCAR, D. C., The Eastern Chālukyas in "*The History and Culture of the Indian People*", 4, 134.

[7] Our Thesis, p. 171.

[8] *id.*, p. 135-39.

[9] KHARE, 2, pp. 4, ff.

The traditional triad, Viṭhṭhala, Puṇḍalīk and Paṇḍharpūr is now complete. Before that date no mention of Puṇḍalīk is known in connection with Paṇḍharpūr, therefore we don't know whether the famous ascetic come to that village a short time or a long time before that date. The fact that the 1189 A.D. inscription does not mention his name, is not a sufficient proof that he was then unknown there.

Twelve years later, in 1249 A.D., a copperplate inscription found near Belgāon confirms the fact that Paṇḍharpūr was chiefly known as the place where Puṇḍalīk took his samadhi (Pauṇḍarīkakṣetre).[10] In 1270 A.D. an inscription found in Paṇḍharpūr gives for the first time to the god the name Pāṇḍuraṅga Viṭhṭhala, the Sanskritized form of Paṇḍaraga Biṭṭaga.[11] Around the same year 1270 A.D., Hemādrī, the famous minister of the Yādava kings, in his book "Caturvargacintamaṇi" gives a list of famous places of pilgrimage and he mentions among them "The famous place of Pauṇḍarīka on the bank of the Bhimarathī where Pāṇḍuraṅga is worshipped".[12] It is also in 1270 A.D. that Nāmdev was born at Paṇḍharpūr itself, in a family traditionally devoted to Viṭhṭhala.[13]

Meanwhile, the name of Viṭhṭhala in this form begins to be found also in the Śimogā country. We know of a god called Viṭhṭhalesa worshipped on the Tuṅgabhadrā in 1216 A.D., of another god called Viṭhṭhaladeva in 1217 and of a temple erected in 1298 in honour of Viṭhaleśvar at Tare in Śimogā. In that country also it is clear that the name Viṭhṭhala has taken the place of the older Biṭṭiga.[14]

In 1273 A.D., the temple of Paṇḍharpūr is either rebuilt or at least considerably enlarged by the same Hemādrī, 84 years after its foundation, in 1189 A.D.[15] It is remarkable that the slab on which this inscription is carved has been known up to our days by the name of "84", although the reason for this name had been completely forgotten till Pr. Tuḷpuḷe discovered the 1189 A.D. inscription.

Now two important literary witnesses dating from that time. i.e. from the end of the thirteenth century, must be added to the inscriptional data listed above. Our first witness is Nāmdev, born as we have seen in Paṇḍharpūr round 1270 A.D. In his various works we find frequent mention of Puṇḍalīk as well as the legends connected with the famous ascetic. The most important point for us in those legends is, that the coming to Paṇḍharpūr of Viṭhṭhala is according to them due to

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[10] I A 14.68, 85.

[11] BHANDARKAR, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p.

[12] KHARE, 2, 1.

[13] RANADE, R. D., *Mysticism in Maharashtra*, p. 185.

[14] Our Thesis, pp. 175-76.

[15] B G, 20 (*Solapār*), p. 422.

Puṇḍalīk. We can assume that the legend was already common knowledge then. It says that the lord of Dvārka was attracted to the bank of the Bhīmā by the extraordinary devotion which Puṇḍalīk was bestowing on his old parents. He did not come alone, but together with "nine lakh of cattle heads and five hundred companions".[16] This legend was enlarged and somewhat changed in later versions, for instance in those of Bahiṇābāi[17] or Srīdharsvāmi. But the main features remained constant, i.e. that Puṇḍalīk was at the origin of the cult of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr, that the peculiar characteristic of the bhakti of this ascetic was his devotion towards his parents, that Kṛṣṇa came from Dvārka to Paṇḍharpūr in order to witness such a devotion, that he came with his flock and that he was made to stand on a brick by the too busy muni. As we find these five points related in Nāmdev gathas, we can safely assume that they had been already in circulation for quite a long time before.

The second witness is of a somewhat different value. It is the Līlācaritra of Cakradhar, one of the oldest books in Marāṭhī[18] literature. However twisted may be the story told by the famous Manbhāv leader about the origin of the rival sect, certain features are striking. The statue of Viṭhṭhala was said to be a stone erected by his sons to a certain man called Viṭhṭhala, killed in a fight. When he says that the man in question was a cattle thief, we may safely assume that it is mere slander : who has ever erected stones in honor of highway robbers? But such a story, which is in fact the oldest literary mention of the god of Paṇḍhari, may very well have some foundation in previous traditions and the most likely explanation is that this Viṭhṭhala instead of being a cattle thief, was really a hero who fought some cattle thieves and died in the struggle. Such happenings were constantly occurring at one time in this part of India, and many hero-stones erected to commemorate such men are found, as we have seen, everywhere in the country. Furthermore, is it a mere coincidence that many of those heroes were called Biṭṭiga, the very name of the god of Paṇḍharpūr in former times?

Finally, to these inscriptional and literary data, an iconographical datum has to be added. If we compare the oldest images available of Viṭhobā, the one feature common to all is the position of the arms akimbo, so much so that it is the distinguishing characteristic of an image of Viṭhobā. Such a position is unknown for an image of Viṣṇu in the Silpaśastras or in any other canonical work. In the same way as there is an etymological problem concerning the name of Viṭhṭhala and its traditional assimilation to Viṣṇu, there is also an iconographical problem concerning the image of that god with arms akimbo. Although it was mentioned in the comparative study made in the seventh chapter of this thesis, sufficient attention was not given to the following facts : the only images with arms akimbo are on the one hand the figures carved on hero-stones in Mahārāṣṭra and Karṇāṭaka, and on the other hand those of Bir Kuar, the Ahir god.

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[16] Nāmdevācā Gāthā, No. 444 (Citraśāḷā ed.)

[17] Bahiṇābāi, Puṇḍalīka Māhātmya in *Sant Bahiṇābāi Gāthā*, Mahārāṣṭra Kavisant mālā, No. 466.

[18] Cakradhar, Līlācaritra, 2.246.

Hero-stones are mostly, if not exclusively, erected in the memory of brave men killed while trying to protect or to recover the cattle of their village from thieves.[19] Bir Kuar is also one of these heroes slaughtered while protecting his herd, who later got deified by the Ahir tribes and became a cattle-god, to be propitiated for the welfare of the buffaloes.[20] Quite naturally he was identified with Kṛṣṇa. Here again we reach the same conclusion, the statue of Viṭhobā seems to be a later development of a primitive hero-stone. It is the only conclusion which tallies with the position of his arms.

Taking all these facts into consideration, but pending new discoveries, it is now possible to propose the following sequence of events in the history of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr.

In 516 A.D., Paṇḍharpūr makes its entrance into history which means here the beginning of Brahmanisation. It is still a tiny hamlet of food-gatherer tribesmen, situated in a clearing on the thickly wooded bank of the Bhīmarthī (perhaps the Diṇḍīra forest of Purāṇic fame). Those tribesmen had had already many contacts with Hindu culture, as their territory was on the trade route from the agricultural settlements of the eastern plains to the creek-ports on the west cost. The caravans leaving Paṇḍharpūr westward had to cross the wild Sahyādrī forest before climbing down the ghāṭs through Mahāḍ, Kuḍā and Śirval.[21] It was, for that part of the Deccan a time of tremendous increase in number of village settlements.[22] Thus, in 516 A.D., Paṇḍharpūr was donated to a brahmin called Jayadviṭṭha. The purpose of such donations was certainly manyfold. These brahmins were expected to be pioneers in a wild country, to transform the food gathering way of life into a plough-village culture. The brahmin community, inspired by this pioneering spirit, became then the main organizational power of the new age.[23] Present in every new village, the brahmin was at the same time the astronomer needed for the correct timing of all agricultural activity; the medical man trained in empirical pharmacology; the priest who knew to keep the social and material order in conformity with the metaphysical law; the learned man who could answer any philosophical or theological question. The development of the Sanskrit literature and its magnificent achievements from the Gupta period up to the XII century provided the brahmin community with an interregional lingua franca, and a jealously guarded privilege over the other castes. India owes her unity to the universal process of brahmanisation of that time.

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[19] K. V. R. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume, p. 205.

[20] ARCHER, W. G., *The Vertical Man*, pp. 25, 51.

[21] KOSAMBI, D. D., *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 249.

[22] *id.*, p. 280.

[23] *id.*, p. 291.

Such agrarian settlements were very much like those of the American pioneers, but with a difference. Both were at first surrounded by hostile tribesmen who resented very much the coming of outsiders in to their own hunting territories, transforming completely its traditional economy. The difference is that the American settlers practically destroyed the Redskins and swept away their civilization, but the brahmin pioneers integrated into their own socio-cultural organization the tribesmen and their culture. The caste system made it possible. Every tribal group joining the new settlements was soon considered a new jāti within the śūdra varṇa : for all practical purposes the ancient four-castes system became a two-castes system and up to this day, south of the Narmadā, the Hindu society is nearly exclusively composed of brahmins and of śūdras divided into many jātis. Not only did this influx of new blood into the Hindu society change its social structure, but even its religious beliefs were greatly altered, as we shall soon see. The tribes were not integrated in a day, nor have they been all up to now. Those who remained outside the pale of the new village communities, went on in their traditional food-gathering ways, but this time often at the expense of the settlers; now and again they raided the new villages, lifting their cattle. The settlers had to protect their goods and flocks themselves, and had to organize a posse to retrieve their herds. In the fight, settlers would die, and when a special feat of bravery had occurred, they would erect a commemorative stone where the hero had fallen.

That such a thing happened at Paṇḍharpūr is not certain : it is only highly probable. In order to get a direct proof, it would be necessary to find the hero-stone itself, and if our hypothesis is correct, its recovery is unlikely, because if the hero-stone in question was replaced later on by a full statue, representing in sculpture the figure roughly carved on it, something must have happened to the original stone long ago. And anyhow no name must have been carved on it, as on so many other hero-stones, because it was not needed, as the villagers' oral tradition kept well alive the memory of the feat and of the hero. And we know the possible name of the hero who is supposed to have died at

Paṇḍharpūr : it was Biṭṭaga, as can be inferred from the 757 A.D. inscription. The name of Viṭhobā itself, the position of his arms akimbo and the 757 A.D. inscription are the indirect evidence which points towards the reality of such a happening in Paṇḍharpūr.

Biṭṭaga must have been pretty soon the object of a cult, as has been the case with Bir Kuar of the Ahir tribes, as a cattle-god to be propitiated for the protection and welfare of the village cattle. He must have attained the fame of a local god even before 757 A.D., because by then the village was called after him, Bhaṇḍharaga Biṭṭaga. There must have been also in the village other objects of worship, erected stones without any carving, near the bank of the river, belonging to the neolithic religion of the tribesmen. As for the hero-stone, it may have been set on the tiny hillock on which the actual temple is built, then called Paṇḍarādrī.

As the years passed and the new settlement grew, the religious as well as social integration of the tribesmen went on. The brahmins were too respectful of any religious phenomenon to destroy right away the old tribal beliefs of their new companions. Anyhow the Vedic gods were far away — in their possibly arctic-home, and by now nearly forgotten. New gods had taken or were taking their place : Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and many others. With the foundation and extraordinary development of a self-supporting village economy ran parallel a likewise extraordinary development of the legends and myths. The brahmin community had evolved theological ideas which made the religious integration of the tribesmen possible. Upaniśadic speculations on the one brahman were not forgotten, but the tribal gods were too near and seemingly too powerful to be easily ignored. In the same way as legendary genealogies were coined for the new petty chieftains overlording a few villages to give them an aristocratic standing, countless myths were imagined to integrate into the brahmanical pantheon the tribal new-comers. Legends and myths were compiled in a new set of sacred books, the Purāṇas, where also new sacred places by the hundred were introduced into brahmanic geography.

At what time did the brahmanisation of Paṇḍharpūr take place? We have seen that as early as 848 A.D. the name Biṭṭiga had been assimilated to the Sanskrit Viṣṇu in the Karṇāṭaka country : at Paṇḍharpūr also, Biṭṭaga is assimilated to Viṣṇu, but indirectly, through Kṛṣṇa. The tribal cattle god was naturally identified with the shepherd boy of Vṛndavan as Bir Kuar was by the Ahirs. The coming of Kṛṣṇa to the bank of the Bhīmā from his city of Dvārka was explained at length in new legends : the lord of Dvārka was then looking for his wife Rukminī who had taken refuge in a big forest. He came with nine lakh of cattle, and met his wife in the river bed at a place now called Veṇhupada, and a temple was built near by and dedicated to him under the name of Gopāl. It is not impossible that the first brahmin settlers had come from the Dvārka country, bringing along with them their herd, and that the new legends were an echo of that event.

It is also during that period, which could be called the purāṇic period in the history of Viṭhobā, that Biṭṭaga became Viṭhṭhala and Paṇḍaraga, Pāṇḍuraṅga. A regular statue must have been set up to replace the old hero-stone, but the main feature, the arms akimbo, was carefully kept, and a few details added to fit an image of Kṛṣṇa as a shepherd boy. In a similar way, the old tribal stones on the bank of the river were, as everywhere else in India, assimilated to the Śivaliṅga. It is to be noted that the integration of local gods into the Hindu pantheon was done according to two different schemes by the Vaiṣṇava and by the Śaivaītes. Old tribal hero gods (Kṛṣṇa, Rāma etc.) were considered as the avatāras of Viṣṇu : the list of these avatāras varies according to the various Purāṇas, which is but normal, each Purāṇa having a different number of identifications as locally required. On the other hand, the tribal stones had very often a special local name, which Śiva assumed with the adjunct of īśvar or nāth : the general theme was that the god with a local name was a demon whom Śankar slaid, assuming thereafter the name of "the master of ...." (Mahābaleśvar, Tarakeśvar, Khandhobā etc....).

The sacred place of Paṇḍharpūr, already sacred before the brahmanisation, was indeed a terra disputata between the followers of Viṣṇu and those of Śiva. Biṭṭaga-Kṛṣṇa undoubtedly won the upper hand, but he did not get it unchallenged : the legend about the origin of the Trimbakeśvar temple which is very close to the Viṭhobā temple, states that there Śiva helped Viṣṇu to slay a demon. Without that help, the lord of Vaikuntha would have been destroyed, (the legend about the origin of the Trimbakeśvar temple near Nāśik speaks also of a three-cornered struggle between Śiva, Brahma and Viṣṇu, in which Śankar got the upper hand.)

The fame of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa Viṭhṭhala soon spread far and wide, in fact all over the Kannaḍa speaking country of the time : the Hoysaḷa king Viṣṇuvardhana (1106-1152 A.D.) was called after him, and temples dedicated to him were built in several places, specially along the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrà river. On the walls of several temples of the Hoysaḷa time, Viṭhṭhala is represented among the avatāras of Viṣṇu, i.e. the ninth (in the puraṇic lists of ten avatāras, the ninth is usually the Buddha).

At Paṇḍharpūr itself, a great event took place, which closed the purāṇic age and opened a new era, the modern or bhakti age. It was the coming of Puṇḍalīk. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know with any certitude the exact date of this event. It took place certainly before 1237 A.D., by which date it was already a fact of long standing, most probably before 1189 A.D., when we know of a group of devotees worshipping the lord of Paṇḍhari. But how long before? All we know is that he was an ascetic (muni) and took his samādhī at Paṇḍharpūr. Some think he was a Kannaḍa bhakta. It is not so certain; his name at least is not Kannaḍa, and Nāmdev the first writer to mention Puṇḍalīk states clearly that he did not know Kannaḍa : "Viṭhṭhala Kānaḍe bolū jāṇe, tyāci bhāṣā Puṇḍlīk neṇe".[24] If the Muni was a great Kannaḍa saint, why don't we find mention of him in early Bhakta Kannaḍa literature? We are inclined to consider him as a proto-Vārkarī and as such as a Mahārāṣṭrian. Up to our days, for instance, the Mahār folk in the Rahuri-Tahārābad country, south of the Pravarā river in the Ahmednagar district, are celebrating his name at their marriage ceremony.

Anyhow, Puṇḍalīk must have been a great mystic and he may have been influenced by the Haridāsa Panth of Karṇāṭaka. His mystical experiences were centred on the figure of Viṭhṭhala identified with Hari. He transformed the purāṇic worship of this god with its elaborate ritual and various pujās, into an interiorized adoration prescinding caste distinction and institutional priesthood. Even now there is a sharp difference between the two religious attitudes, the first being advocated by the Badvas of the temple, the second by the Vārkarīs. This new religious outlook can be considered as a reaction against the overwhelming domination of the brahmin community and their esoteric language, Sanskrit. The Śūdra jātis, organized and educated by the brahmins had now reached adult age, the very success of the brahminisation of the villages had prepared this new development of Hinduism.

The fame of Puṇḍalīk at Paṇḍharpūr grew so much, that the village began to be known as the sacred place of Puṇḍalīk (Pauṇḍarīkakṣetra). And the legend of Kṛṣṇa in quest of his wife was no longer felt to be a suitable explanation for the coming of Viṭhobā to Paṇḍharpūr. It was soon said that Puṇḍalīk was the real cause of his presence there. Hari (rather than Kṛṣṇa), while in Vaikuntha (rather than at Dvārka), heard of the fame of Puṇḍalīk, and went down to see him. So moved was he by the devotion of this ascetic for his old parents that he decided to stay there under the form of Viṭhobā; and it was his wife who came after him, looking for her vanished husband : "Puṇḍalikāvarade Hari Viṭhṭhala".

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[24] **Nāmdev, 0.1960.**

Puṇḍalīk has not left any written work, but his memory has remained alive in his disciples; Nāmdev and Jñāndev were among them the first great poet-saints : the non-brahmin aspect of the Vārkarī Panth will be evident for a long time, most of its great men coming from the śūdra or outcast jātis, or even from outcasted families; many of them had to suffer from the hostility of the brahmin community (Jñāndev, Tukārām etc...) ; marāṭhī and not sanskrit became their sacred language. From 1189 A.D. on, the temple of Paṇḍharpūr was built and rebuilt on an ever increasing scale, the pilgrims flocked to the sandy bank of the Bhīmarathī in ever growing numbers. Still it was only in 1958 A.D. that the Badvas threw the temple open even to outcastes and foreigners after the bold action of Vinobā Bhāve. Still many a Poona brahmin is in 1960 A.D. looking down at the Vārkarīs.

Thus Viṭhobā was but a tribal cattle-god, one may say after reading this postscript. Everything else is only legend and myth, however poetical it may look! How can we believe any longer in a mere human fancy? If such reflexions were the necessary conclusion of this thesis, we would never have written it. It is our conviction that one may be a scholar and at the same time a bhakta; history and religion are not only compatible, they are fast friends. When, in an issue of 1955 the "Sovietskaīa Pedagoguika" says : "Religion rejects scientific demonstration; religion requires only blind faith; it is the arch enemy of intelligence and scientific proof", we know that this is not true. In order to destroy Religion, the communist propagandist has to identify religion and superstition yet superstition alone is the enemy of intelligence, religion on the contrary is its greatest ally. To meet the challenge of our materialistic times, the true bhakta has to believe with the eyes of his reason wide open and to clean his faith from legends and myths. It is out of a deep christian bhakta conviction that this thesis was written.

Poona, July 1960 G. A. DELEURY S. J.
Aṣāḍhī Ekādāśī Śaka 1882.

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Amṛtānubhava. Philosophical work written by Jñāneśvar, 110.
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Āratī. Ritual waving of a burning lamp in front of a statue or a person.
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Āṣāḍha. Fourth lunar month of the Hindu year, at the beginning of Monsoon, 2. see Ekādaśī.
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Avatāra. "Descent" of God (usually Viṣṇu) into this world under a visible form, 1, 113, 127, 148, 163, 188, 192, 201.
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Badvā. Brahmin sub-caste, owner of Viṭhobā's temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 45, 63, 101, 102, 202.
  as guide for the rites, 99.
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Bahamani. Muslim dynasty in the Deccan (1347-1482 A.D.) 12,39,41.
Bahiṇābāi. Female Brahmin disciple of Tukārām. 5, 15, 23, 47, 144, 197.
Bairāgī. Religious mendicant, 54.
Bālājī. see "Venkateśvar".
Bālakṛṣṇa. see "Child-god".
Benārī. A ministrant in Viṭhoba's temple, duties, 65 — at Pañcāmṛtapujā, 69 — at Śejāratī, 70 — at Mahāpujā, 101.

Bhagavadgītā. The famous dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, as a part of the Bhīṣmaparvan of the Mahābhārata. Often called an Upaniṣad.
110, 113, 183, 190.
Bhāgavata Panth. Hindu sect following the bhakti marga, 1, 3.
Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Late Purāṇa enjoying considerable popularity among the bhaktas. 3, 13, 54, 110, 190.
sung in Vyāsa temple, 58.
Bhajan. Religious function consisting in singing abhaṅgas or other hymns.
as popular among Vārkarīs, 5, 6.
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Bhakta. Follower of the bhakti marga.
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Bhānudās. Mahārāṣṭrian bhakta, great-grandfather of Eknāth, 12, 40, 111.
Bijāpūr. Muslim dynasty in the Deccan, (1493-1687 A.D.) 41, 44, 45, 46.
Bir Kuar. Cattle-god of he Āhīrs (Kṛṣṇa).
165, 166, 182, 183, 198, 200.
Biṭṭideva Hoysaḷa. The first name of Viṣṇuvardhana Hoysaḷa (1110-1152 A.D.), 34, 135-39, 169, 195, 201.
Brahmacārī. A twice-born in the student stage of his life, any one observing strict chastity. 16.
Brick. On which Viṭhobā is standing erect.
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Buddha. Viṭhobā considered as the —, 1, 126, 129, 132, 133, 163, 187, 201.
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Cakra. One of Viṣṇu's weapons, the (solar?) disc. 148.
Cakradhar. Founder of the Manbhāv Panth, 2, 181, 191, 197.
Cālukya. Hindu dynasty in the Deccan. (535-757 A.D.) 29, 33, 194, 195.
Cāṅgdev. Famous yogin converted to the bhakti marga by Muktābāi. (samadhi, 1325 A.D.), 40, 52, 62, 112.
Caste. A unit (jāti) in the Hindu social system, abolished in the Prārthanā Samāj, 19.
against the Vārkarī spirit, 104.
still going on, 105.
Child-god. Worshipped in India under various names (Bālakṛṣṇa, Bālājī, Subrahmanya, Skanda etc.) Viṭhobā as a —, 148, 183, 184, 185.

Cokhāmeḷa.	A Mahār bhakta. (samādhī, 1338 A.D.), 5, 37, 38, 56, 60. not allowed to enter the temple, 51, 61.
Dakhani.	Mixed lingua franca of the Deccan under the Muslim rulers, 43.
Dāmājipant.	Brahmin bhakta at Maṅgalveḍhā, (XV cent.), 40.
Dāṅge.	Ministrant in Viṭhobā's temple, 61.
Darśana.	"Sight" of God. To get a darśana is to stay for a while in front of a sacred image, animal, person. of Jñāndeva's Pādukās, 81. of Jñāndeva's horse, 83. of Viṭhobā, 72, 73, 87, 102. of a santa, 73. of Mallikārjuna, 55.
Dasarā.	Hindu festival occurring on the 10th. bright day of the Aśvin month (September-October), 54, 83.
Devbrāhmaṇa.	Ritual meal offered to brahmins, 99, 102.
Dharma.	Religious (ethical, biocosmical) rule, 4.
Diṇḍī.	Banner carried during processions, thence religious organic group of bhaktas venerating the same guru. as a unit in the Pālkhī, 83. organization of a —, 84. united by community singing, 85. as a spiritual unit, 103, 104. united by common hardships, 105. hostility between various —, 105.
Diṅgre.	Ministrant in the Viṭhobā's temple, 65. duties at the Pañcāmṛtapujā, 69 — Aparhaṇapujā, 70 — Śejāratī, 70.
Divaṭe.	Ministrant in the Viṭhobā's temple, 65 duties at Śejāratī, 70.
Ekādaśī.	The eleventh bright day of any lunar month. They are held as fast days of special holiness by the Vārkarīs, chiefly the Āśādhī and Kārtikī ones, at the beginning and end of the monsoon, 2, 11, 12, 15, 45. as a day of obligation, 2, 73. rites performed on —, 71. Āśādhī —, 87, 109. Kārtikī —, 50.
Eknāth.	A Mahārāṣṭrian brahmin, famous bhakta. (1533-1599 A.D.), editor of the Jñāneśvari, his life, 12-14. his Samādhī at Paiṭhan, 41, 79, his Pālkhī, 79, quoted, 68, 99, 123 etc.
Faith.	As required from the bhakta in order to obtain God's grace, 68, 112, 113.
Gadā.	One of Viṣṇu's weapons, 148.
Gaṇapati.	(Gaṇeśa, Vinayaka). The popular god with an elephant head, said to be the son of Śiva, 101, 119, 128.

Gaṅgabheṭa.	Ritual bath in a sacred river when first reached, 99, 100.
Garuḍa.	(Solar) bird in close relationship with Viṣṇu, 61, 68, 93.
Ghāṭ.	Steps going to a river. There are 11 at Paṇḍharpūr, 48, 52, 102.
Godāna.	Ritual gift of a cow to brahmins, 99, 100.
Gokuḷāṣṭamī.	Hindu festival occurring on the 8th. dark day of the Śravaṇa month (August), Kṛṣṇa birth-day, 54, 57, 72.
Gopāla.	Name of Kṛṣṇa as "protector of cows", 57, 70, 122. worshipped at Gopālpūr, 102, 103.
Gora.	"The potter" (Kuṁbhar), a Mahārāṣṭrian bhakta, (1267-1397 A.D.) living at Teraḍhokī, 5, 33, 37.
Gorakṣnāth.	Famous leader of the Nāth Panth, a Pālkhī called after him, 79.
Govinda.	Name of Kṛṣṇa as "gatherer or finder of cows", 67, 122, 123.
Gṛhasthāśrama.	The second among the four theoretical stages of a brahmin's life. Householder. Vārkarīs and the — 2.
Gupta.	Hindu dynasty in Northern India, (320-570 A.D.), the golden age of Hindu civilization, 26, 27, 28, 199. its iconographical style, 160.
Guru.	Spiritual teacher, 4, 5, 17, 18, 73, 76, 80, 99, 103, 110, 124.
Guruparaṁparā.	Poetic composition in praise of the guru, 99.
Hanumanta.	see Māruti.
Hari.	Name of Viṣṇu, "the fawn-colored one", 7, 67, 70, 93, 97, 98, 122, 144, 160, 202.
Haridāsa.	Ministrant in the Viṭhobā's temple, 65. duties at the Kākaḍāratī, 66 — at the Aparahṇapujā, 69 — at the Nāmdev gruel rite, 72. as ministrant at the Amṛteśvar temple, 56 — at the Tāmbḍā Māruti temple, 57.
Haridāsī Panth.	A Vaiṣṇava sect in Karṇāṭaka. influential at Vijayānagar, 42, 202.
Harihara.	Composite name for the dyad Viṣṇu-Śiva. as qualifying Viṭhobā, 53, 115, 126, 161, 162, 185
Haripāṭha.	Metrical composition in praise of Hari. as composed by Jñāneśvar, 97, 98, 99.
Hemādrī.	(or Hemāḍpant) Famous minister of the Yādava king, famous for his writings in Prakṛt and his temple building, 36, 37, 40, 45, 48, 58, 62, 63, 155. as rebuilding the temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 35.
Hero-stones.	(or Vīragal) Commemorative stones erected on or near the place where a warrior or a saint died violently, 171, 175, 181, 188, 197, 198, 199.
Horse.	see Jñānadeva.
Hoysaḷa.	Hindu dynasty in the Deccan (1117-1263 A.D.), 31, 32, 33, 38, 41, 60, 135, 140, 201. their style in Architecture, 60, 155, 164. inscription under the —, 173, 193.

Initiation. see Vārkarī.
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1311 A.D., 38, 62, 180.
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Jaina. Belonging to Jainism, 30, 32, 135.
a ministrant in the Amṛteśvar temple as a Jaina, 56.
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Janābāi. Servant of the great bhakta Nāmdev, herself a bhakta, (samādhī c.1350 A.D.), 5, 12, 57.
Janārdana Swāmi. Mahārāṣṭrian brahmin, guru of Eknāth (1504-1575 A.D.), 41, 78.
a Pālkhī called after him, 79.
Jñānadeva. (or Jñāneśvar) The famous Poet-philosopher author of the Jñāneśvarī (1275-1296 A.D.),
as founder of the Vārkarī Panth, 5, 37, 39, 48, 88, 124.
his life-story, 7-11, 110.
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as performing the buffalo miracle, 182.
as appearing to Haibatrāo, 18.
his temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 54.
as quoted, 11, 64, 89, 94, 97, 98, 145.
Jñāneśvarī. The great Marathi commentary on the Gītā, written by Jñāndev c.1290 A.D., 7.
composed at Nevasa, 8, 10.
edited by Eknāth, 13.
as the "Book" of the Vārkarīs, 3, 10.
as quoted, 111, 121, 124.

Kanhopātrā. Daughter of a dancing woman of Mangalvedhā, famous for her beauty and bhakta poems, 5, 40, 57, 66, 67.
Kannaḍa. Dravidian language spoken in Karṇāṭaka, (by 14.5 million p. in 1951), 36, 39, 41, 42, 43, 77, 78, 201, 202.
as spoken formerly at Paṇḍharpūr 7, 23, 180.
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as still spoken under the Yādavas, 33, 34.
Paṇḍharpūr as a — name, 28, 180.
Viṭhṭhala as a — name, 134.

Karṇāṭaka.	One of the Indian States called also Mysore, 37, 151, 158, 173, 188, 198, 200. as a style of music, 34.
Kārtika.	Eighth lunar month of the Hindu year, at the end of the monsoon (October-November), see Ekādaśī.
Keśava.	Name of Viṣṇu, "the long haired one", 68.
Khaṇḍobā.	Mahārāṣṭrian name of Śiva, worshipped at Jejurī, 186, 201.
Kirtan.	Religious function where a kirtankar speaks for a few hours to his bhakta audience, interrupting now and then his preaching for the singing of some pious hymns bearing on the same topic, 86, 105, 107, 121. as a Vārkarī custom, 5, 6. as held by Tukārām, 15, 16. as held at the Amṛteśvar temple, 56. as a way to benefit by the repetition of the name of God, 123, 125. what a good kirtan should be, 123.
Koḷī.	A low caste of fishermen, sailors, ferry-men, water-fillers; also a tribe. Very ancient inhabitants of Mahārāṣṭra, specially devoted to Śiva. as in charge of many temples at Paṇḍharpūr, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59.
Kṛṣṇa.	The great Avatār of Viṣṇu, increasingly famous since the Epic age, the centres of diffusion of his cult being Mathura and Dwārka, a favourite god among the bhaktas, as worshipped by Vārkarīs under the name of Viṭhobā 2, 130. as frolicking in Gokulā with the Gopīs, 36, 72. as a shepherd boy, 101, 183, 198, 201. as the husband of Rukminī, 185 as coming from Dwārka to Paṇḍharpūr for the sake of Puṇḍalīk, 7, 144, 197, 200, 202. as leaving his foot-print at Viṣṇupada, 70. his iconographical representations, 161, 165, 166.
Kuar.	see Bir Kuar.
Liṅga.	Sign, mark (of Śiva), a phallic form of Śiva. as set on Viṭhobā's head (?), 53, 149, 151, 157. as worshipped at Paṇḍharpūr in the Puṇḍalīka's temple and many others, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57. as originated from megaliths, 200, 201.
Liṅgāyat.	Virasaiva sect in Karṇāṭaka, 31.
Mahāpujā.	The "great rite", as performed in the Viṭhobā's temple, 101.
Mahār.	Outcaste people, forming a very important proportion of the rural population in Mahārāṣṭra, 202. as forbidden to enter Viṭhobā's temple, 51, 61. as equal members in the Vārkarī Panth, 105.

	the famous bhakta Cokhāmeḷa a —, see Cokhā. as worshipping Vetal, 184. Viṭhobā appearing as a —, 40, 80.
Mahāśivarātrī.	Hindu festival occurring on the 13th dark day of Māgha, Śiva festival. as held in many temples at Paṇḍhapūr, 54, 55, 56.
Mahipati.	Brahmin of Tāharābād, chronicler of the great Mahārāṣṭrian bhaktas, (1715-1790 A.D.), 17, 40, 48, 62, 144, 182, 191.
Mahiṣāsura-mardinī.	"Destroyer of the buffalo-devil", a name of Durgā. as worshipped at Saptaṣṛṅgī, 187.
Manbhāv.	(or Mahānubhāva) heterodox, Hindu sect, exclusively devoted to Kṛṣṇa, influential in Mahārāṣṭra under the Yādava rulers, 4, 33, 35, 110, 112, 115, 118, 120, 181, 197. as pioneer in Marāthī literature, 9.
Mantra.	Esoteric motto given by a guru to a disciple at the time of his initiation, 4.
Marāṭha.	(or Kuṇbi), a member of the various jātis forming the bulk of the "householders" in Mahārāṣṭra, 1, 4, 24, 25, 88. champions of the Hindu revival against the Muslim rule, 14, 45, 63. as united by Śivājī, 16. as rebels against the Muslims, 38. as collaborating with the Muslims, 44. as successful in their rebellion, 46. as prone to internal wars, 49, 50. as defeated by the British, 51. as devotees of Ambābāi, 58. as a class of ministrant at Gopālpūr, 57. as bodyguards, 83.
Marāṭhī.	Language spoken in Mahārāṣṭra, 4, 23, 24, 25, 31, 35, 36, 127. as spoken by the Vārkarīs, 6, 77, 78, 88. as spreading under the Yādavas, 9. as spoken at Paṇḍharpūr, 7, 32, 33, 34. as vehicle for Hindu scriptures, 10, 203. as uniting feature of the Hindu revival, 14. as spoken at the Muslim court of Ahmadnagar, 43.
Mārga.	"Way" towards Mokṣa, 3, 111.
Māruti.	Mahārāṣṭrian name for Hanumanta the monkey-god, 54, 56, 57, 61, 63.
Māyā.	The illusory aspect of the phenomenal world, the power of God as creator of such a world, 110, 111, 118.
Mhasobā.	Buffalo deified for having been made to recite the Vedas by Jñāndev, 182.
Mokṣa.	Final liberation from the determinism of the Saṁsara, as obtained through bhakti, 107, 112.
Mughal.	Muslim dynasty at Delhi, (1555-1837 A.D.), as conquering the Deccan, 44, 46. as a style of Architecture, 61.

Muktābāi. sister of Jñāndev and famous bhakta, (1279-1297 A.D.), 5, 8.
  her samādhī and pālkhī at Mehun, 78.

Naivedya. Ritual offering of light food for a pujā, 70.
Nāmdev. Famous Mahārāṣṭrian bhakta, belonging to the Śiṁpī caste, (1270-1350), 5, 13, 65, 68, 88, 202, 203.
  his life-story, 11.
  his samādhī at Paṇḍharpūr 39.
  his temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 54.
  the Nāmdev gruel ceremony, 72, 183.
  as vilified by the Manbhāv sect, 181.
  as quoted, 111, 114, 116, 117, 121, 197.
Name of God. Repetition of the —, a favorite practice among bhaktas, 121, 122, 127.
Nārada. Legendary bhakta, acting as messenger of the gods in the Purāṇas, 67, 125, 144.
  his temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 23, 102.
Nārāyaṇa. Name of Viṣṇu as "the one whose abode is water" Viṣṇu as dreaming the creation, 93, 123, 125, 155.
Nātha Panth. Sect of yogis, very influential at the time of Jñāndev, 9, 110, 112, 124.
Nemināth. Jaina Tirthaṅkar, assimilated to Viṭhobā, 126, 162.
Niḷobā. Deśastha Ṛgvedī Brahmin of Pimpaḷneḍ, disciple of Tukārām (samādhī c.1658), 15, 16, 18, 47, 88.
Nirañjan. Ritual lamp filled up with ghee, 67.
Nirguṇa. The unqualified aspect of the transcendent God, 98.
Nivṛttināth. Elder brother and guru of Jñāndev, (c.1268-1294 A.D.), 9, 110, 124, 162.
  a pālkhī called after him, 79.

Padma. One of Viṣṇu's 'weapons', the lotus, 148.
Pādukās. Footprints of a god or of a saint, as symbolizing their spiritual presence, 76, 80.
  as centre of each pālkhī, 82.
  Viṭhobā's —, 57, 65.
  Jñāndeva's —, 12, 18, 82 — Darśan of —, 81, 85, 86. — venerated by the Vārkarīs, 85.
Pālkhī. The palanquin into which the pādukās of a saint are placed for a procession, hence a group of pilgrims following the same guru, living or dead, 77, 82.
  as fostering community spirit,, 106.
  Jñāndeva's .., see Jñāndeva.
  List of the — for 1951 A.D., 77-82.
Pañcāmṛta pujā. Ritual anointing of an image with the five 'nectars' : milk, curds, ghee, honey, sugar, 58, 69.
Pāṇḍuraṅga. Another name of Viṭhobā, 1, 115, 123.
  first mentioned in 1270 A.D., 35.
  name of a sect, 40.

Pantha.	A 'way', a group of people following the same 'way' towards mokṣa, 3. see, Vārkarī, Bhāgavata, Haridāsī, Nātha, Rāmdāsī.
Parabrahma.	God as absolute and transcendent, 110, 115.
Parameśvar.	God as the universal Lord, 118.
Paricāraka.	Ministrant in the Viṭhobā's temple, 65, 66, 69.
Paurṇimā.	The full moon day of any Hindu lunar month. of Āśāḍa and Kārtika, 57, 64, 87. of Āśvina, at Padmāvatī temple, 58. of Caitra, held at Tāmbḍā Māruti, 57. of Kārtika, held at Vyāsa, 58.
Pilgrimage to Paṇḍharpūr.	The great event of the Vārkarī religious year, held during Āśāḍa (at the beginning of the monsoon), 45, 75. as a duty for a Vārkarī, 2, 3, 75, 103. various routes, 77-80. organization of the —, 83-86. programme of the singing during the —, 89. as a means to live in the intimacy of the santas, 88. as inspired by a voluntary spirit, 103. as a means to social integration, 105, 107. as an ascetic practice, 108. as preventing the pilgrims from falling sick, 87.
Piṇḍa.	Ball of food offered at a śrāddha ceremony, as offered at Viṣṇupada, 101.
Pradakṣiṇā.	a walk round a sacred spot, keeping it always on the right. The small or deva — at Paṇḍharpūr, 52, 54, 60, 102, 156-7. The great or nagar —, 52, 57, 157.
Pradoṣa.	In Mahārāṣṭra, fast held on the 13th bright day of any lunar month, 5.
Prārthaṇā Samāj.	Hindu revivalist movement of the 19th. century in Mahārāṣṭra, 19, 20.
Prasāda.	Any sweetmeat given as a thanksgiving or parting gift after a (religious) function, 69, 72, 101. also, the grace of God, 112.
Priests.	Concerned with the ritual in the temple of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr, 64, 65. see : Baḍvā, Dāṅge, Dingre, Divaṭe, Haridāsa, Paricāraka, Pujārī.
Pujā.	The most popular form of Hindu worship, consisting in bathing, feeding etc., an image, 65, 69, 70, 202. see : Pañcāmṛta pujā, Madhyahṇā pujā, Aparahṇā pujā, Prakṣalā pujā.
Pujārī.	Ministrant in the temple of Viṭhobā, 64, 66, 69, 151.
Puṇḍalīka.	According to the inscriptions, an ascetic (muni). According to the Vārkarī tradition a great bhakta; as attracting Viṭhobā to Paṇḍharpūr, 7, 23, 58, 66, 67, 68, 113, 115, 124, 125, 144, 162, 188, 189, 190, 203. his temple at Paṇḍharpūr, 52, 53, 103. as a Kaṇṇaḍa muni (?), 7, 33, 202. as mentioned in the inscriptions, as Puṇḍarīka, 33, 195. as Pauṇḍarīka, 35, 36, 202.

Purāṇa.	The medieval chronicles as a part of the Hindu scriptures, 97, 186, 188, 200, 201.
Rādhā.	The favorite among Kṛṣṇa's gopis, 185.
Rāma.	One of the main avatāras of Viṣṇu, specially worshipped round Āyodhya, 200. as represented by his pādukās, 82. repetition of the name of —, 122.
Rāmakṛṣṇa.	Name of Viṣṇu refering to his two main avatāras, 98, 122.
Rāmānanda.	Vaiṣṇava guru, founder of the Vairagins and one of the most influential bhaktas of northern India, 1.
Rāmānuja.	Indian philosopher (9th. century), 3, 135, 136.
Rāmdās.	Famous Mahārāṣṭrian guru, founder of the Rāmdāsīs, companion of Sivājī, 14, 15, 57, 63. a pālkhī called after him, 80.
Rāmdāsī Panth.	The followers of Rāmdās, 14, 15, 17.
Raṅgaṇa.	Horse display during the great pilgrimage, 107.
Rāṣṭrakūṭa.	Hindu dynasty in the Deccan (733-973 A.D.), 25, 26, 29, 195.
Rebirths.	The long series of successive births composing the human destiny according the traditional Hindu belief, 150. see also : Saṁsāra.
Rites.	as performed at the temple of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr, 65 ff. as performed daily : see Āratī and Pujā. These daily rites are: Kākadāratī, Pancāmṛtapujā, Madhyaṇhāpujā, Aparaṇāpujā, Śejāratī. as performed periodically, 71.
Rukmiṇī.	(or Rakhumabhai) one of Kṛṣṇa's wives, 57, 67, 68. her temple, 61, 63, 200.
Sādhānā.	Various means to reach self-realization, self-realization itself, 123.
Sādhu.	Holy man, 2, 13, 104, 108.
Saguṇa.	The qualified aspect of the transcendent God, 98.
Śākta.	Hindu sect holding that śaktī is the unique cause of the cosmos, 119.
Śaktī.	Divine Power, considered by the śāktas as superior to any god; symbolised by Durgā as śakti of Śiva. 119, 124.
Śāḷigrāma.	Ammonite like stone, sacred to Viṣṇu, found in the Gandakī river. as used in the Godāna rite, 100, 101.
Śāḷuṅkā.	The stone in the center of which the Śiva liṅga is placed, 52, 53, 54, 56.
Samādhī.	In yogic terminology the final union with or absorption in the absolute self; en-stasis. Hence, in bhakti, final absorption of a bhakta in his God when he dies, hence the memorial (stone) set up where he died, 38, 52, 53, 73, 81.
Saṁsāra.	Human destiny understood as a tragical succession of lives, hence the cares and troubles of life, 97.
Sanaka.	Famous purāṇic santa, 91, 125.

Śaṅkara.	The greatest of India's philosophers (8th or 9th century), 3, 110, 185. as the so-called writer of the Pāṇḍuraṅgāṣṭaka, 147.
Śaṅkha.	One of Viṣṇu's weapons; the sea-conch, 69, 148.
Sannyāsāśrama.	The fourth (theoretical) stage of a brahman's life; the state of a Sannyāsī. as regarded by the Vārkarīs, 2. as discarded by Eknāth, 14. as pined for by Tukārām, 15.
Santa.	Technical term among the bhaktas to call a holy man after he has taken samādhī, or even during his life time; a santa is also usually a guru and a kirtankar. etymology and meaning, 73. as a link between God and man, 74, 123, 125. as compared to a mother, 75. as commemorated during the pilgrimage, 87. as a member of the 'society of the saints', 3, 66, 76, 77, 80, 87, 104, 121, 124, 195. as symbolised by his pādukās, 76, 77. as the center of a pālkhī, 73. as not yet the object of scientific biography, 21. The main santas among the Vārkarīs are : *Puṇḍalīka*, *Jñāndeva*, Nivṛttināth, Sopāndeva, Muktābāi, *Nāmdeva*, Cāṅgdeva, Gorā, Visobā Khecara, Samvata, Narahari, Cokhāmeḷa, Janābāi, Senā, Kanhopātrā, Bhānudās, Janārdanaswāmi, *Eknāth*, *Tukārām*, Niḷobā, Bahiṇabāi.
Santastutī.	Poetical composition in praise of the santas, 99.
Satavāhana.	Buddhist dynasty in the Deccan (c.30 B.C. — c.227 A.D.). 25, 26, 29, 79.
Śejāratī.	Evening āratī, see : Āratī.
Senā.	A barber in the service of a sultan of Bidar, (c.1448 A.D.), famous bhakta, 40.
Śilāhāra.	Hindu dynasty of Kolhāpūr (c.10th A.D. -1220 A.D.). Another dynasty at Thāṇā, 34.
Śiva.	For many Hindus, the supreme God, 128, 200. as Viṭhobā, 115, 126, 184. as despised by Tukārām, 119. as worshipped by the Bhāgavatas together with Viṣṇu, 1. as worshipped at Paṇḍharpūr, 35, 58, 201. his temples at Paṇḍharpūr, 53-57, 201. So-called Śiva-liṅga on the mukuta of Viṭhobā, 53, 149, 157.
Śivājī.	Founder of the Marāṭha empire, incarnating the Hindu national spirit against the Muslim rule (1627-1680 A.D.), 15, 16, 17, 44, 45, 51, 78.
Sopāndeva.	Younger brother of Jñāndeva and famous bhakta (1274-1293 A.D.), 8. samādhī and pālkhī at Sasvaḍ, 37, 79, 81.

Srāddha. Vedic funeral rite still widely performed in India, 57, 99, 101.

Stone-worship. Not to be identified with image worship among Vārkarīs, 120.

Subrahmanya. Dravidian child-god, considered as the son of Śiva, 161, 185.

Ṭāḷ. Small cymbal used by the bhaktas to beat the rhythm during bhajan or kirtan, 12, 16, 83.

Tāpa. Any ascetic practice.
  the pilgrimage as a —, 108.

Telugu. Dravidian language spoken to the east of Mahārāṣṭra, 77.
  an old — work mentioning Viṭhṭhala, 37.
  as spoken at the Vijayānagar court, 39.

Tīrtha. Sacred ford in a river, hence sacred water-spot, hence sacred spot, hence water given as prasād after having been used to wash an idol, 69.

Tukārām. The most popular of the Mahārāṣṭrian bhaktas, a śudra from Dehu (1598-1650 A.D.), 5, 13, 20, 45, 47, 48, 78.
  his life-story, 15-16.
  samādhī and pālkhī at Dehu, 79.
  his love for Viṭhobā, 64.
  his regard for the santas, 74.

Tulasī. A shrub, the holy basil, sacred to Viṣṇu,
  as venerated by Vārkarīs, 2.
  as carried during the pilgrimage, 84.

Tulasī māḷā. Rosary made of Tulasī wood, worn by Vārkarīs, 2.
  as given at the time of initiation, 4.
  as worn during the pilgrimage, 12, 84.
  as an ornament of Viṭhobā, 148.

Vaikuntha. Celestial abode of Viṣṇu, 98, 150, 201, 202.

Vārkarī. The most important bhakti group in Mahārāṣṭra, 1.
  etymology, 2.
  characteristics, 4, 5.
  history of the —, 6-18.
  the —, and Hindu revival, 14.
  as an exclusively Mahārāṣṭrian group, 120.
  as specially devoted to Viṭhobā, 6, 64.
  as going to Paṇḍharpūr every year, 73, 103.
  as showing happiness during the pilgrimage, 103, 104.
  as not keen on performing purāṇic rites, 102.
  as following Śankara's philosophy, 3.
  as following the bhakti mārga, 110-125.
  as compared with other sects, 3, 17, 110.
  as compared with the Manbhāv, 4, 110, 112, 115, 118, 120.
  as claiming Puṇḍalīka as their founder, 189.

Vāsudeva. Name of Viṣṇu as worshipped by the Bhāgavatas, 94.

Vedas. The four oldest books in the Hindu scriptures.
  as claimed by the Vārkarīs, 1.

	as unable to give a true knowledge of God, 67, 68, 111. as singing the praises of Viṭhobā, 67, 97. as mentionning Viṣṇu among the gods, 143. the Puruṣa sukta, a Vedic hymn, sung at the abhiṣeka ceremony in the temple of Viṭhobā, 69. Vedic mantras recited at the Aparaṇhapujā, 70. as recited by a buffalo, 182.
Venkateśvara.	(or Bālājī) Name of the god worshipped at Tirupatī, 184, 161.
Vetāla.	Popular cult among the lower castes in Mahārāṣṭra, specially among the Mahārs, 183, 184.
Vijayānagar.	Hindu empire in South India (1336-1565), 12, 39, 43, 176. as a style of architecture, 60.
Viṇa.	Stringed instrument, often played by kirtankars, 12, 84.
Virāgal.	see 'Hero-stone'.
Virupakṣa.	Family God of the Vijayānagar dynasty, 39.
Viṣṇu.	One of the two main gods of Hinduism since purāṇic times, specially worshipped as Bhagavan and Vāsudeva by the Bhāgavatas, 1, 115, 119, 126, 128, 130, 131, 134, 141, 142, 152, 155, 162, 163, 168, 197, 200.
Viṣṇupada.	A shrine in the Bhimā river bed near Paṇḍharpūr, 23, 57, 101, 183, 201.
Viṣṇuvardhana.	see 'Biṭṭideva'.
Visobā Khecara.	Mahārāṣṭrian Brahman, disciple of Jñāndeva, (Samādhī c.1309 A.D.), 11, 37.
Viṭhobā.	The God of Paṇḍharpūr, various etymologies, 126-146. various images of —, 147-166. as standing on a brick, 5, 6, 7, 144, 151. as holding his arms akimbo, 2, 9, 148, 150, 163, 165, 166, 181, 189, 197. as a child, 148, 153, 156, 157, 161, 183, 184, 185. theories about the origin of —, 181-192, 198-203. his temple at Paṇḍharpūr; description, 60, 61. history, 62, 63. his statue shifted from Paṇḍharpūr to Vijayānagar, 12, 30, 62. — broken in 1873, 51, 151. his pādukās taken to Viṣṇupada, 57.
Vyāsa.	A Vedic seer, traditionally known as the author of the Hindu scriptures, 97, 102.
Weapons.	The four — of Viṣṇu : see 'padma', 'cakra', 'gadā', 'śankha', 148, 161.
Yādava.	Hindu dynasty of the Deccan (1185-1317) A.D.), 7, 9, 12, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 44, 193, 195.
Yoga.	A way towards mokṣa, 112, 124.

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